

THE REPENTANCE OF
MAGDALENÈ DESPAR

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THE REPENTANCE
OF
MAGDALENÈ DESPAR
AND OTHER POEMS.

BY
G. ESSEX EVANS.

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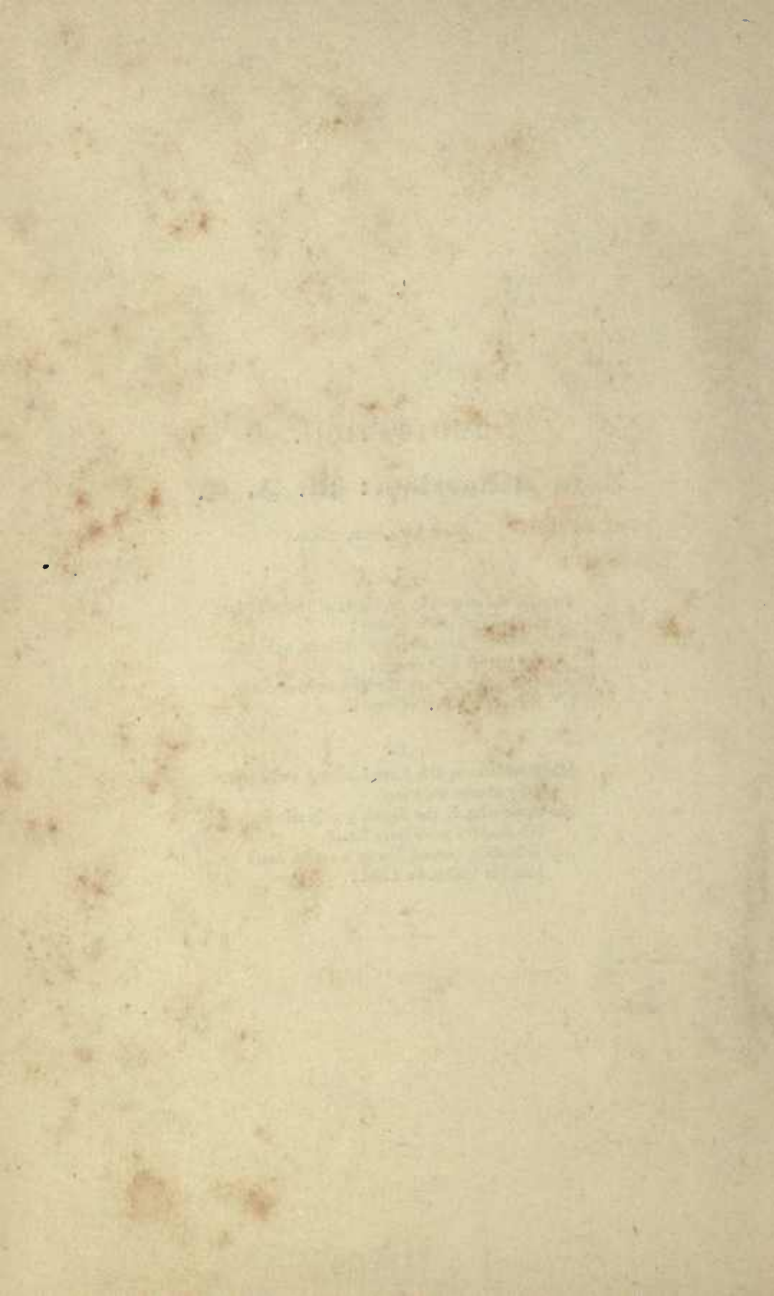
January, 22, 1890.

I.

Beyond the deepening shadows of Death's night
God giveth perfect light ;
When earthly love and light no more can shine
He giveth love divine ;
And on the weary heart, where sorrows cease,
He sets His seal of Peace.

II.

His Rest is sure, His Love is strong and deep.
Why should we weep
For those who, in the silence gently stirred,
His Angel's voice have heard,
And following, passed, led by a tender hand
Into the Unknown Land ?



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THE REPENTANCE OF MAGDALENÈ DESPAR.

PART I.

I.

“O THE richness of Morn ! O the freshness of
Spring !

When the heart is upborne as a bird on the wing ;
When the fire in the hearts of the poets bursts forth in
the songs that they sing ;

“In the depths of my heart when my girlhood was
young

I have felt myself part of the songs that they sung,
Of words that were mingled with music in measures that
trembled and swung ;

“When I dreamt that the world was made only
for me—

The white waves that curled on the shores of the
sea—

The myst'ry of Nature—the breath of the Spirit that
broods over forest and lea.

“In the midst of the wild as a wild-flower I grew

With the heart of a child that was tender and true
In the calm of seclusion unbroken where pleasures were
simple and few.

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“I can see my home still, the wide view it commands

From the crest of the hill where the head-station stands

O'erlooking the waste of blue waters that circle the shimmering sands.

“In the bright bygone hours never shadowed by care,

In a garden of flowers where the roses were fair,
They held me the Queen of the Roses—the purest and stateliest there.

“Not till then had I known that I wore on my face

As a light that is thrown from a heavenly place
The jewel of beauty, impearled on my brow, the sign-manual of fairness and grace.

“Tho' I knew not of love, of the radiance that gleams

As a light from above, as the glint of bright beams
That colour the grayness of Life with the richness and beauty of dreams ;

“Yet I formed an ideal of the fancies that start,

Of whispers that steal from the depths of the heart,
And I mused o'er a love that was deathless, that sorrow and pain could not part.”

II.

“In the youth of the year
When Winter is dead and the strength of her reign has
 been broken,
When Nature has donned the soft colours of Spring as a
 token,
And hearts that were weary are filled with a gladness
 unspoken
 That Spring-time is here ;

“When on forest and plain
Rich hues lie unsullied, reborn in their brightness and
 splendour,
In dark-green and emerald, carmine and azure, tints
 subtle and tender,
Fresh from the hand of the Artist Immortal, the touch
 of the Sender
 Who paints them again ;

“When solitudes teem
With the life and the glory with which all existence is
 glowing,
When laden with music and rich with perfume the slow
 zephyrs are blowing,
When Spring waxing strong with the strength of young
 days into Summer is growing,
 I woke from my dream.

“And, waking, I passed
From the dreaming of visions whose influence held me
 and bound me
To the light of a faith and the strength of a love that will
 ever be round me,
For here, on the desolate station, the Fate that I dreamt
 of had found me—
 Had found me at last !

“Not the hero and lord
Of the castles I built in the hours of an indolent leisure,
Not the youth in the flush of his prime seeking beauty
and pleasure,
Whose heart was afire with high hope and a love without
measure
For her he adored.

“Not such was the man
To whom I had given the best gift that a woman possesses,
The faith of a heart yet untouched when her soft voice
confesses
The passionate sweetness of Love with its sighs and
caresses—
Giving all that she can.

“The autumn of life
Had silvered the locks once as dark as the wing of the
raven,
Had tempered the passions that oft make a strong spirit
craven,
And Time's rugged ploughshare on face and on brow had
engraven
The scars of the strife.

“In his eyes Love still sees
That light that in sorrow or trouble burns brighter and
clearer
From the soul of a strong man and just, to whom honour
is dearer
Than wealth or high fame or soft ties that are firmer and
nearer
And better than these.

“Why need be retold
What is old as the Earth is, but still in its passion and
yearning
Is new, ever new, with its longings, hopes, fears, and
heart-burning,
Is new, ever new, to the heart that its soft creed is
learning—
The new tale that is old ?

“O light was my heart
When the bells from the church on my marriage morn
gaily were pealing,
And we on the steps of God's altar together were kneeling
And uttered our vows before Him who our compact was
sealing
Till Death did us part.

“Ah ! Why had they said
Not age with gray hairs and grave face for bright youth
was created,
Only Youth in the glow of Life's morning with Youth
should be mated ?
Ah ! Why do those words haunt me now in these days
evil-fated
When I would I were dead ? ”

III.

“Life is like a mighty river rolling onward to the sea,
Past low meadows, rocky headlands, still it flows un-
ceasingly,
Swerves in curves, and flows in stretches, ever varying its
force
As the banks contract or broaden in the channels of its
course.

But to all who sail its waters comes a time when Fate
 may glide
 Slowly, calmly, gently onwards with the ripples of its tide ;
 So to me ere yet I dreamt of aught of sorrow, shame, or ill,
 Came a time of sweet contentment when my days were
 pure and still.

“ Four long years we lived together on the station by the
 sea,
 Far from that old well-loved homestead which had been
 the world to me ;
 Here no belts of yellow sandbanks form a stretch of
 shimm’ring strand,
 But the beetling crags and headlands rise abrupt on either
 hand ;
 And for gentle ripples falling with slow music on the
 shore,
 Wild and high above the storm wind you may hear the
 breakers roar.
 Four long years in cloud and sunshine lived we on this
 rugged coast,
 Where the cries of wand’ring sea-birds seem the wailings
 of a ghost ;
 Where on winter eves at midnight bursts the giant hurri-
 cane,
 Shakes the four walls of the station till the timbers start
 again.

“ Four long years in cloud and sunshine lived we by the
 restless sea,
 Where each day was as another in its calm monotony ;
 But my heart was changing slowly, and I felt with secret
 pain
 Friendship take the place of Love where only Love itself
 should reign.

Was it only woman's fancy made me think him cold,
austere—

Till I felt the love I bore him tempered with an unknown
fear?

Was it that my heart rebellious scorned that grave and
courteous air,

Longing for a wilder spirit with more fire to do and dare?

Wrapt in cares of which he spoke not, tho' his smile was
kind and mild—

I, a wife, with woman's longings, to be treated as a child!
So I nursed my wrongs in silence, musing o'er my wounded
pride,

Till a barrier grew between us whom no barrier should
divide.

Often in those days I fancied I could hear those words of
truth—

'Youth, not age with fifty winters, should be wedded unto
youth.'

"Three long years in cloud and sunshine we had watched
our darling grow

Like a flower upon the mountain, bright as light, and pure
as snow;

Only one was mine to cherish, but a fairy full of grace,
In whose laughing eyes and features once again I saw my
face;

All the love and all the yearning in a heart as wild as mine,
All my hopes and my ambition centred in this gift divine.
Where to southward of the station lies a little sanded bay,
Bringing back to me the memory of a careless childhood's
day,

Here at times I oft would linger with the child in early
spring,

Dreaming of the Unknown Future, wond'ring what the
years would bring.

.

"Was it that a curse from Heaven lingered over mine
and me ?

Oft methought I heard God's anger in the moaning of
the sea ;

For the child I loved so dearly, the sole solace of my
pride,

Like a flower before the storm blast sickened in the Spring
and died.

And we laid her in her beauty on the cliffs beside the bay,
Where so oft at morn and evening I had watched her
careless play.

On the dark and pine-crowned mountain lies her lonely
little grave,

And for dirge we heard the sea-wind and the beating of
the wave.

"Then for days I lay in fever, shrieking with fierce voice
and wild ;

Cursing God and cursing Nature for the deathbed of my
child.

And beneath its weight of sorrow slowly my proud spirit
sank,

Till at last my senses left me and my life became a blank.

"Weak and ill at last I wakened from that dark and
dismal night,

But the world seemed changed around me and the
sunshine lost its light ;

And the Springs of Hope were withered, and love's flame
had ceased to burn,

And I knew a power had left me that would never more
return."

PART II.

I.

“Changed I was, my love grown colder, vivid fancies
thronged my brain,
Forms and faces hovered round me, and I turned from
them in vain ;
And a madness fired my spirit till I could not bear the
place
Haunted by the tender memory of one little childish face.

“So at last we sold the station, left that wild and rugged
shore,
Changed the calm of Nature's fastness for the busy city's
roar.
For the years had made us wealthy, richer far than those
we met,
And I longed for some excitement that would teach me
to forget.

“In those days of calm seclusion I had thought not of
the worth
Of the royal gift of beauty Nature gave me at my birth.
Then a girl unformed and simple, *now* a woman 'midst
my peers,
And my mirror showed my beauty had but ripened with
the years.
What to woman were gold tresses, Grecian face, imperial
form,
But to hold mankind in bondage and to take the world
by storm ?

“Statelier than all women round me, with an air of
careless pride
Little cared I for their hatred with men thronging to my
side.

Still my husband, ever with me, spoke no word and made
no sign

That he knew the gulf was widening fast between his life
and mine.

So I plunged into the vortex of a wild and reckless set,
Ever seeking fresh excitement that would teach me to
forget.

“ Was it only sorrow drove me to those scenes with folly
rife ?

Or the thought of something missing in the lottery of
life ?

Often came again the memories of a better, purer day,
When at morn from heated ballrooms swift our carriage
rolled away.

Who shall read a woman’s secret ? or divine what women
think ?

One kind word perchance had saved me when I trembled
on the brink,

But his coldness numbed my spirit, and I moved unto my
fate,

Love first changing into friendship, friendship changing
into hate.

“ Well I knew my beauty lingered as a theme on every
tongue,

And I learnt to love the homage of the men who round
me hung,

Till the thirst for admiration at last became a daily
need—

Ah ! what misery in the sowing of that single deadly
seed !

Fatal is the gift of beauty to a woman weak and proud ;
Better far for her the features of the homeliest in the
crowd.

Drinking of the wine of flattery till its fumes had turned
my brain,
Thinking only of the worship of the fools who thronged
my train,
Conquest but succeeded conquest when all bowed beneath
my spell,
Till in all the pride and splendour of my vanity—I fell.”

II.

“O, fain would I hide
Myself and my shame in the depths of the fathomless sea,
Beneath storm, beyond calm, where no echoes of past days
can be ;

In a tomb deep and wide
Where wrapt in a mantle of darkness and peace I might
slumber afar
From the noise of a world where the voices of Sorrow and
Memory are.

“Hope ! Is there hope ?
Ah ! the hope that shall shine in the gloom of the Valley
of Death ;
Yea ! E'en 'neath the wings of dark Azrael, the chill of
his breath ;

What courage can cope
With Fate when repentance avails not, tho' tears may
have fallen like rain ?
Can the rose that is soiled in the dust of the way its lost
beauty regain ?

“Peace ! Is there Peace ?
Ah ! the peace that is hers whom no woman forgets or
forgives !
The stigma of shame that no penitence ever outlives !
For her shall not cease

The frost of contempt and keen words and the stings of
the arrows of scorn.

Ah ! better for her who shall fall in her pride had she
never been born !

“Light ! Is there light

In the deepening of shadows gigantic that gather and
roll—

In the veils of black darkness o'erwhelming the shudder-
ing soul

Like wings of the night ?

Not from man, not from woman, comes mercy to those
who shame's pathway have trod.

Hope, Peace, Light, alone can be found in the infinite
mercy of God.

“O pitiless fate !

O frailty of woman ! that heeds not tho' danger be clear,
That stifles the voices of warning, refusing to hear—

That hears when too late !

Canst thou cleanse the soiled lily of honour by pain and
remorse of long years,

Tho' thou cherish its life with thine anguish and water
its petals with tears ?

“O for pow'r to forget

When Mem'ry is madness, and thought as the stabbing of
swords,

When the sneer of contempt and the lingering sting of
his words

Are haunting me yet !

‘I have torn thy false face from my heart, thou art
nothing to me save a name,

And o'er thee shall linger for ever the horror and curse
of thy shame.’ .

“ Ah ! where shall I find
Some refuge of darkness, some cave of oblivion, deep-
hidden, serene,
Where hushed are the voices of Mem’ry and shades of
the past are unseen,
Where the senses grow blind
’Neath the spell of a peace that is brooding supreme o’er
an echoless shore,
And the dreams of dead hopes and lost honour shall
reach me and haunt me no more ? ”

III.

“ How weary the years
To the heart that is reckless of aught that the future may
bring !
That heeds not the glory of summer, the freshness of
spring ;
When sorrow and tears
And the sharp aching throb of remorse burn fiercely like
fire in the brain,
And only the ghosts of past days and the shadow of evil
remain.

“ I have learnt he is dead ;
Nor ever again shall I list to that voice once so tender
and true—
Nor ever again shall I see that strong face which no fear
could subdue.

I have learnt he is dead ;
He has fallen enthroned with the brave in their glory,
yet scorning to yield or to flee,
But breathing no word of forgiveness—and leaving no
message for me.

“ I have learnt that he fell
 'Midst the storm of the battle that raged far away on the
 hot blinding sand,
 Serving unknown in the regiment where once he had
 held a command ;
 And the sound of his knell
 Was the thunder of cannon, the rattle of bullets swift
 hissing like rain,
 And his shroud was the flag he defended—his bier was a
 mound of the slain.

“ Methought that I woke
 'Midst the combat, and saw the blue gleaming of steel
 bristling bare ;
 But haggard and white were the faces that manned the
 four sides of the square ;
 Then came the long stroke
 Of galloping hoofs shaking earth in their thunder, and
 peal upon peal,
 Then the crash and recoil of the squadrons that reeled
 from those walls of blue steel.

“ 'Midst murderous rain,
 The square closing up, filling gaps made by dying and
 dead,
 Returning with volleys defiant each death-dealing chal-
 lenge of lead ;
 Then sounded again
 The rush of wild steeds, and the redd'ning of sabres, the
 loud grinding shock,
 Where alone 'midst the waves of the battle those heroes
 stood firm as a rock.

“ Ah ! I saw him still there,
Unmoved 'midst the gleaming of sword play, the can-
non's deep roar,
In one hand the flag that he guarded, in one the long
sabre he wore ;

His thin silver hair
Streamed wild in the breath of the battle, and full on his
resolute face
Was the glow and the light of a spirit that yields not, but
dies in its place.

“ But it was not to last,
For swift the dark squadrons had rallied—the square was
a handful of men,
And the strength of the foe unto theirs was e'en greater
than sixty to ten ;

Till, wild as the blast,
One desperate charge overwhelmed them, yet dying they
scorned still to yield,
And fighting they fell at their posts every man—but
mown down like the grass of the field.

“ My heart is as stone,
But the tears of my grief will not flow tho' I would I
could weep
For the mem'ry of Love that was tender and faith that
my folly held cheap,

Ah ! too late we own,
With tones of self scorn and upbraiding and pangs of
unquenchable pain
That we know not the worth of a heart till we lose it
and seek it in vain.

“Perchance it is best ;
 I have wronged him in thought and in deed by a wrong
 that no tears can repair.
 Ah ! would it were *I* and not *he* who was lying in majesty
 there !

He has found a last rest,
 He has fallen enthroned with the brave in their glory, yet
 scorning to yield or to flee—
 But breathing no word of forgiveness and leaving no
 message for me.

.
 “O desolate years !
 I am weary and stricken, and fain would I lay me at peace
 Where the roar of the noise of the world and its follies
 and vanities cease,
 Its hopes and its fears.
 Yet one thing remains to a spirit as saddened and hope-
 less as I,
 To seek the old home where my darling is sleeping and
 look on her grave ere I die.”

PART III.

I.

Night has come ; o’er vale and mountain fast her sable
 robes are sweeping,
 Fainter wanes the dying sunlight ling’ring slow by
 shore and lea,
 Not a whisper mars the silence round the spot where she
 is sleeping
 Save the murmur of the breezes and the music of the
 sea.

With melodious sound and nearer beat the waves with
ceaseless motion,
Beat the waves in measured cadence falling on the rocky
strand,
And the low wind sighs responsive to the rhythm of the
ocean
Like the song of some sweet singer echoing thro' a
dreary land.

All th' immeasurable ether gleams and glows with light
supernal,
Glitt'ring points of red and crystal, trembling bars of
silver white,
Watchfires where the armèd angels guard the throne of
the Eternal,
Outposts of a host unnumbered, scattered through the
Infinite.

.

'Tis the grave ; no urn of marble crowns the site with
classic splendour,
On the headstone gray and rugged hangs a single faded
wreath,
Wild flowers round it and above it—emblems of the pure
and tender—
None are half so sweet and spotless as the flower that
lies beneath.

Here, where Peace on wings majestic rules the Night as
her dominion,
Watches with her shield of Silence at the grave beside
the sod,
Dreamlessly the child is sleeping 'neath the shadow of her
pinion,
Far from passion, toil, and sorrow ; near to Nature and
to God.

"Tiny blossom that hath faded ere the summer's noon
 and beauty,
 Whom an angel's hand hast gathered in the sweetness
 of the Spring ;
 Little feet that have not learnt to tread the iron path of
 Duty,
 Have not felt the sword of Sorrow, or the bitter shames
 that sting.

"It is better thus, my darling ! Better than a dark to-
 morrow
 Where the fruits of Love and Pleasure turn to Passion
 and Despair,
 For the joy of Life is lesser than the burthen of its sorrow,
 And I would that God would lay me in the grave beside
 you there."

II.

"Deeper, wider grows the darkness o'er the forest softly
 stealing ;
 Shadowy trees as dim and gloomy as the shadows they
 have thrown
 Gird me round with walls Cimmerian as I weep in silence
 kneeling
 By the grave that holds within it all that I can call
 mine own.

"What is Life ? A changeful season—bright to-day and
 dark to-morrow ;
 Say not : 'Those who sow in anguish shall at last in
 gladness reap.'
 Rather say : 'The fruits of Folly shall be reaped in pain
 and sorrow'—
 Then, the voice that all must answer—and the last long
 dreamless sleep.

“Hark! On pinions swift, untiring, sweeping southward,
sweeping shoreward,
Over continent and ocean comes the wild wind flying
fast,
Like a god he comes to conquer from his Kingdom in the
Nor’ward,
And a clarion voice is ringing—’Tis the spirit of the
blast!

“Hark! Again that voice, resounding, swells and sinks
in trembling motion,
Ringing nearer, ringing clearer, like a sweet-toned silver
bell,
‘Magdalenè! Magdalenè!’ echoing shoreward from the
ocean—
’Tis my darling’s voice that calls me. ’Tis the voice I
loved so well.

“Not a sound—the dark trees stir not. Am I waking?
Am I dreaming?
Silence in the shadowy forest, silence in the wilderness,
But in arching blue above me crystal stars are coldly
gleaming
Like the eyes of those who judge me, cruel, stern, and
pitiless.

“List! From utter darkness round me once again that
song sonorous,
As of those whose souls unfettered soar beyond these
prison bars,
Comes, with sound of rushing pinions, voices in celestial
chorus,
Mighty waves of deep-toned music rolling heavenwards
to the stars.

"'Tis as tho' the skies were sundered and the starry hosts,
 descending,
 Bring the joy of the Immortal to a soul in dark despair,
 'Till I hear the mystic echo of those voices strangely
 blending
 Ling'ring in one trembling note, and dying on the
 midnight air !

"But one clear voice dies not ever : over mountain, shore,
 and hollow,
 'Magdalenè ! Magdalenè !' ever calling from the sea.
 'Tis my darling's voice that calls me, and with trembling
 steps I follow
 Whereso'er that voice shall lead me till it lead at last
 to Thee."

III.

Mute she sped ; thro' lonely forests on her feeble foot-
 steps bore her—
 Weird ravines, dim haunted valleys, where the storm
 sprites range and rave,
 Till the shelving hills dipt eastward, and she saw at last
 before her,
 Wide and far, a pall of darkness on the sleeping summer
 wave.

Till by yellow sands and shingle, dim dark rocks, gaunt
 cliffs and hoary,
 Stood the woman pale and weeping, with sad heart and
 weary feet,
 And the harvest moon arising smote the heavens with
 sudden glory,
 Trembled on the faint horizon where the sky and waters
 meet,

Clothed the misty deep beneath it with a weird and pallid
splendour,
Shot a ray of stainless silver 'thwart the wave from East
to West,
Cleft th' empurpled dusk asunder with a radiance white
and slender,
With a stream that flashed and trembled on the purple
ocean's breast—

Which to weary eyes that watched it seemed a path to
Realms Immortal,
Seemed a path of light celestial that the angels might
have trod,
From the shores beyond the Dawning to the verge of
Death's dark portal
Leading from this vale of shadows to the Majesty of
God.

Flash the vaulted heights with brilliance, myriad gems
that gleam and quiver,
And the ocean's shining bosom mirrors clear the
jewelled dome!
“Heaven above and heaven beneath me; and beyond—
the silver river—
Still she calls me . . . ‘Magdalenè!’ . . . Darling
—I am coming home.”

Then the clarion voice vibrated over ocean, shore, and
hollow—
“Magdalenè! Magdalenè”—ever calling from the sea;
And she answered, “I am ready. Onward! Onward! I
will follow
Wheresoe'er thy voice shall lead me till it lead at last
to Thee.”

From her soul she felt the burden of her sorrow slip and
 sever,
 As the mists disperse and vanish, fading at the face of
 Day ;
 All the passion and the fever of the brain were gone for
 ever—
 All the fierce unrest and longing sank in peace and
 passed away.

IV.

“I am bound by a power that is deathless, a yearning
 divine
 That draws my soul onward, resistless, my child, unto
 thine,
 That lifts my sad heart with a gladness unspoken to thee,
 Thy voice from the sea.

“Lo ! the shame and the shadow of sin that lay dark on
 my breast
 They have lifted and vanished as mists from the blue
 mountain's crest
 Thro' the silence of death, thro' the gloom and the glory
 of Night,
 I shall pass into light.

“Thy voice like the sound of sweet melody trembles and
 falls,
 Thy voice like the peal of the clarion thrills me and
 calls—
 Calls me to thee at the gates of High Heaven in the
 Realms of the Blest—
 And I pass to my rest.”

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And as one who moves and gazes fixed and silent in her
dreaming,
With a step that did not falter and a heart that did not
shrink,
Like a goddess in the moonlight, with her fair hair round
her gleaming,
Passionless, erect, and stately, passed she, slowly, to the
brink.

With her blue eyes wide and dreamy, golden locks around
her clinging,
Bride of Death and crowned with beauty fair as hers
whose name she bore,
Following onward, following ever, where that clarion
voice was ringing,
Down the calm and silver river passed she, silent, from
the shore.

Deeper, deeper, grew the waters closing round her and
above her,
Dimmer grew the dusky shore-line fading faintly in the
West,
Till the purple star-flushed ocean clasped her to him like
a lover,
Drew her in his strong embrace, and hid her, sleeping,
in his breast.

But the Night-breeze blowing shoreward bore a sound
o'er vale and hollow,
"Magdalenè ! Magdalenè !" ever calling from the sea,
And the trembling echo answered, "Onward ! Onward !
I will follow
Wheresoe'er thy voice shall lead me till it lead at last
to Thee."

THE BLACK KNIGHT.

FIERCE were the feuds on the Borderland
When the sword was Law in the days of old,
When the world was ruled by the mailèd hand,
And the might to seize was the right to hold.

In the gory tracks of the War God's feet
Rapine and Terror came following fast,
As each slumbering town and peaceful street
Awoke to the sound of the trumpet's blast.

Then the day was bright with the glint of arms ;
Then the night was red with the fires that leapt
From burning hamlets and wasted farms
Where the ruthless floods of invasion swept.

From across the Tweed came the clansmen bold,
And Northumberland's spearsmen barred the way ;
But an English Earl lay rigid and cold
Ere the Borderers fled from that deadly fray.

.
Three years rolled onward, and Time had spread
A mantle of peace by the Northern rills ;
No trumpet's blast and no martial tread
Woke the echoing voice of the slumb'ring hills.

On the armoury wall hung the tall war-shield,
And the good sword rusted within its sheath,
And the knights who charged on the battle-field
Now followed the chase o'er the purple heath.

.

But again they come ! From across the Tweed
Rush the lawless Borderers forth to war ;
With gath'ring strength and with stealthy speed
They march 'neath the light of the morning star,

Till the gleaming line of their battle-van
By noonday breaks thro' the leafy wood,
And the message speeds onward from man to man :
"The castle is girt by the Northern brood !"

Then spreads a tumult of fierce surprise
And swords are girded with stern intent
As the creaking drawbridge upward flies
And the archers rush to the battlement.

In the spacious hall of that castle gray
Sat the widowed Countess whose noble lord
Was slain in the arms of Victory
Three summers since by a Northern sword.

Ah ! Too well she guessed as she heard the din
The dire import of that echoing shout,
The tramp of the armoured guard within
And the rattle of shafts on the walls without.

As she sped from the hall to the ramparts high,
Where the faithful ranks of her vassals stood,
All hearts beat fast as she passed them by
In the pride of her perfect womanhood.

Like a vision of beauty in dreamland born
She stood in the midst of those mail-clad knights
As a wild flower blooms in the bearded corn,
Or a bright star gleams in the misty heights.
But white was her cheek as the driven snow
Ere its mantle covers the Autumn leaves,
And her dark eyes shone with feverish glow
As she glanced t'wards the Northern helms and greaves.
Then she spake to the Chief of that silent band,
Who stood sternly watching the moving foe,
While the good swords shone in each knight's right hand,
And the shaft on the string of each archer's bow :
"Speak ! Where is the boy ?" Not a voice replied ;
Not a warrior stirred ; but from face to face
There flashed the dread which they could not hide—
" *In the ruthless hands of that hated race !* "

" I come from the Chiefs who have crossed the Tweed,
And I speak in the words which they spake to me,
Yield the castle up : drop the bridge with speed,
Or the boy shall swing on the nearest tree."

Then answered Humont of Chillingham Keep
(The dead Earl's brother), and roundly swore,
Till the castle walls were a ruined heap
To fight for the monarch whose badge he wore.

A more fearless heart on a battle plain
Beat not in Britain or north of the Tweed,
But his mind was made of a warlike grain,
And his faith was the faith of the Spartan Creed.

" Go hence, Sir Herald, to whence ye came,
And tell the Chiefs of yon Northern horde
That they who dare offer such terms of shame
Shall find reply at the point of the sword ;

And if but one hair of the young child's head
Be harmed by them—then for every hair
A Northumbrian blade shall gleam blood-red,
When Humont of Chillingham storms their lair."

Then the Countess, turning her troubled eyes,
Spake with trembling lips, and with gesture wild ;
" Will ye stand and look while my darling dies ?
I love my king, but—O, my child ! my child ! "

But they looked at the forest of spears which shone
On the plain beneath, and their bold hearts fell
At such terrible odds. Oh ! was there none
Who would save the boy whom she loved so well ?

There was one ! He had loved with a hopeless love,
Had loved her as maid, and widow, and wife,
With a faith as pure as the stars above,
The one pure faith of a sinful life.
For his youth had been wild, and his hands were red
With the blood of crime, and the fearful fame
Of his prowess and lawless deeds had spread
Till the Border rang with his hated name—
The Black Knight, Conrad, whose sword and plume
When far in the battle they gleamed and tossed
On the field where the brave Earl met his doom
Had turned the tide when the day seemed lost.
Dark was that plume as the raven's wing,
Black was his armour from head to heel,
And the two-edged sword none but he could swing
Was wrought and fashioned of bluest steel.
His face was pale, but it was not fear
That had blanched the bronze on his rugged cheek,
But a passion that told in a single tear
The depth of a thought which he could not speak,

From its sable sheath leapt his shining sword ;
By the cross of its hilt and by Holy Rood
He swore he would wrest from that savage horde
The only joy of her widowhood.

Then he looked at the faces that burnt with shame ;
And the hosts of the North he gazed upon ;
And he said, as his colour went and came :
“ They have slain the sire ; shall they slay the son ? ”

The Countess heard ; and her heart was sore
With mingled sorrow and joy and pride
As she thought of the love she had scorned before
And the faith of a heart she had cast aside.
She strove to speak, but she strove in vain ;
She strove to move, but her limbs seemed stone ;
And her bosom heaved like the troubled main
When its surface is ruffled and tempest-blown.
And the passion that swelled in her tender breast
Had made her face like the face of the dead
As her hand to his bearded lips he prest
And passed from her sight with a steady tread.

Then the Black Knight turned and with steady hand
Filled the crystal goblet and raised it high
Till it glittered and flashed like a shining brand
In the mellow light, as he made reply :

“ Thro’ the lists of Life rides an Unseen Knight
On a phantom steed from the Realms of Gloom,
And he challenges all to stand and fight
Ere they pass thro’ the gates of the silent Tomb.
What matters it then, since we all must fall
At the fatal thrust of his viewless spear,
If I meet him now ’neath the castle wall
For the sake of the boy whom she holds so dear ?

I have charged ere now at the bristling banks
Of a steel-blue line when all hope seemed wild ;
I will tilt with Death in the Northern ranks
For the pure young life of this fair-haired child.
Fill the goblet up with the blood-red wine,
Be it Life ! be it Death ! we are comrades true,
Drink thou to my sword in the battle-line !
I will pledge the sweet face which I leave with you ! ”

With the drawbridge down, and the postern wide,
And a steady grip on the bridle-rein—
One touch of the spur to the stallion's side,
And he shot like a bolt for the open plain.
With his visor barred, and his broadsword freed,
And his black plume tossed in the wind's strong breath,
When the long low strides of the gallant steed
Beat stronger, faster, he rode to his death.
Breathless they watched from the plain—from the gate,
Both friends and foemen struck dumb to see
One warrior charging fearless and straight
The deep ranks of the Northern chivalry.
From the plain—from the gate—from the castle roofs
No sound was borne on the balmy gale
Save the echoing thud of galloping hoofs
And the clank of the rider's sable mail.
He crashed thro' the ranks of that armoured band
Ere a sword was drawn or a shaft had sped,
Till he reached the tree where a cruel hand
Had just swung the boy to a branch o'erhead.
One circling flash of the shining blade
And the cord was cut and the boy was free—
One strong bold reach with his arms he made,
And the child sat firm on his saddle-tree.
Then broke the thunder of falling blows,
As they rained like hail on his sable gear ; -

And the gleam of his sword as it fell and rose,
And the ring of his war-cry proudly clear.
And louder and louder the tumult roared,
And brighter and brighter fresh steel flashed forth,
As high in the midst of that savage horde
His dark plume waved o'er the crests of the North.
And swift was the hiss of his Southern sword
As it swung like a reed in his strong right hand,
And short was the shrift of each warlike lord,
If it beat down the guard of his Northern brand.
Beneath the shade of his tall black shield
He covered the boy on his saddle bow,
And the strength of a nature that could not yield
Gave nerve to his arm and illumined his brow.
But the odds were long and the strife was sore,
And thrice in the conflict they saw him reel,
And thrice the crest that ne'er bent before
Was lost to their sight in that sea of steel.
But ever it rose ! At his terrible tilt
The Borderers shrank till his broadsword good,
Erst blue as the river, from point to hilt
Was crimson and dripping with Northern blood.
Quoth the seneschal on the castle wall ;
" No blade in Britain this day could stand
'Gainst such frightful odds. The boy must fall
With the bravest heart in our native land."
But, maddened to frenzy, he charged again ;
The black steed sprang to the spurrèd heel ;
He thrust to the heart and he clove to the brain
Wherever he struck, as he cleared a lane.
To the right, to left, the Borderers reel
At the terrible sweep of that dripping steel.
And the weight and strength of the brave black steed
And the cut and thrust that was sure and straight
Broke through their ranks, and at headlong speed
He raced once more for the castle gate.

But she who watched from the battlement
Had seen with growing terror, and wild,
That his gear was stained and his armour bent,
And he swayed in his seat as he held the child.
Till his face grew white with a sudden pain
As he fell to the ground with a hollow groan,
And the maddened steed with a trailing rein
Bore the child to the castle gate alone.
Then strong as the tide of the torrent sets
Was the rush of the North on its helpless prey ;
But the hurtling hail from the parapets
Guarded the ground where the Black Knight lay.
While the cross-bow shafts were as deadly rain
They bore him in whom no fear could quell,
And the clank of the bridge as it rose again
Smote on their hearts like a funeral knell.
All bruised and bleeding they bore him in,
And they knew as they bore him that ne'er again
Would his broadsword clash in the steel-rung din,
Or his war-cry float o'er the battle plain.

.

The pure white flame of a deathless love
Burnt in his soul, and his brow grew bright
With a radiance that seemed to the eyes above
Like a faint reflex of celestial light,
Till the waves of passion lashed high and broke
Over his soul in a stemless tide,
And rushed to the cold blue lips and spoke
With the strength of a love which he could not hide :

“ I have loved the clash of the ringing steel
When it gleams blood-red in the mailed hand,
And the crash of the charge when the riders reel,
And the short sharp tones of the stern command ;

The brunt of the battle—when deadlocks hold
The steeds and the riders in grappling vice,
Where the hate is bitter, and hearts are bold,
And a faulty thrust is not given twice.
I have loved the bay of the deep-mouthed hound,
And the mellow swell of the bugle horn,
When the short green sward was a jewelled ground
With the diamond dew of the early morn.
I have done with the chase and the martial strife,
And I crave them not, for thy dark eye saith
That the love which I could not win in life
Shall be mine for ever, my love, in death.
Bend down thy dark and sorrowful eyes
Till the burning rays of their light illumine
The vapours of Death, and the mysteries
Of the path which lies thro' the gates of gloom.
O clasp me still closer to thee, and lay
My sinking head on thy trembling breast !
I had prayed to fall where the broadswords play,
But to breathe my last in thine arms is best.
With the blood of crime has my hand been stained ;
My faults are many, and virtues few,
But one light that never wavered or waned
Was the guiding star of my love for you.
And it may be yet in that Unknown Land,
Where my soul, ere long, shall have entered in,
That a true deed done by a strong right hand
May balance the weight of a life of sin.
My heart throbs slow with a tremulous beat,
The words I would utter sound faint and low ;
But the touch of your warm red lips is sweet,
And whisper you love me before I go.
I have played my part in the world of strife,
And why should I linger for lesser bliss ?
Ah ! what now are the years of a misspent life
To one single hour of a death like this ? ”

JOHN RAE BURN.

I.

"DEAD ! Who says she is dead ? . . . I hold his letter
before mine eyes.

Gone from the Valley of Shadows to the light of ineffable
skies !

He writes 'She is dead,' and I know of no cause to
suspect that he lies.

"He writes 'She is dead !' and the light of a hope that
I dreamt would not die

Has flickered and waned into darkness and left but the
pitiful cry :

'God gathers the flowers that are purest and best and
thou shalt not ask why.'

"Not dead ! for the soul is immortal. She lives where
these eyes cannot see,

And I sit here alone in the silence, and commune,
O Sorrow, with Thee.

But living or dead, till I cease to be, she can never, never
be dead to me.

.

"Who shall write with a fearless hand the secret
thoughts of his inmost soul ?—

Bare his thoughts to the common gaze like written
words on an open scroll ?—

Tell of the fever of passionate love that none can
conquer and few control ?

“Who shall judge by the outward man what the inner life of that man may be?—

Judge of the currents that dart beneath by the placid breast of the sleeping sea?—

Read the truth of the things we see not by the light of the things we see?

“Sweet yet sad seem the days long gone when Youth looked round on the world and said :

‘See how the garden of Life is garnished with lilies white and with roses red.’

Ne’er a thought of the autumn winds when leaves are scattered and flowers are dead.

“Years have rolled, but it seems not so, since first I came from the mother-land,

Since the day I wandered down by the sea and heard the waves beat loud on the sand.

Who shall say the trifles of Life are not the work of an Unseen Hand?

“The Unseen Hand of a changeless Fate that bends our souls to a Higher Will,

That gathers lives from North and South for the destiny they must each fulfil,

From Life, thro’ Death, to that Unknown Land—the goal and zenith of good or ill.

“Ah! Trifles in Life, tho’ we heed them not, are stoutest links in the brittle chain.

We heed them not, but they bind us fast, with a clasp we can never break again,

Their silken web has the strength of steel, tried in sorrow and proved in pain.

" Hers was fair as an angel's face in its passionless calm
and its sweet repose,
And I stood and watched the gentle heave of her tender
breast as it fell and rose
Like lazy waves on a summer sea when winds are dying
and silence grows.

" She had fallen asleep on the yellow sand where the
sunshine played with her golden hair,
And the heavy fringe of her eyelids drooped on a cheek
as pure as the lilies fair,
And over all hung the shadow of Peace and the scent
of the sea-weed everywhere.

" Why tell the tale that was never new since man's first
love to the world was told ?
The songs which the poets sing to-day are but the songs
which they sang of old,
Yet the theme will live in its deathless bloom when
hands are withered and hearts are cold.

" We dreamt in those days of a faith too deep, of Love
made stronger than Death can be,
And our souls were filled with a passionate fire that
surged and swelled like a southern sea ;
Tho' bitter the hour of our parting proved, she
whispered, ' My soul is given to thee ! '

" Far out West, where the breath of the wind is as the
blast from a furnace mouth,
I made my home in the wilderness, in the land of fever
and fiery drouth ;
But my soul was hers and it lingers still by the breezy
shore of the pleasant South.

"I have borne the damp of the chill morass and the
burning heat of the tropic day,
Five years have I toiled for the woman I love with a faith
that Time shall ne'er decay,
Fortune has smiled on my strong right hand ; but all
that I care for has passed away.

"Too late I learn all her heart concealed. 'Too late ! too
late !' the Echo saith.
Her letters ceased as her hand grew weak, and fainter and
fainter her parting breath.
The beauty she wore as a royal robe, alas ! was the fatal
beauty of Death.

"She is gone ! with her heavenly face and the voice that
rang out over the sea ;
And I sit here alone in the silence and commune,
O Sorrow, with Thee.
But, living or dead, till I cease to be she can never, never
be dead to me."

II.

"Three years since she died ! and Time has calmed the
first wild fever of grief and pain,
The wound has partly healed, tho' I deemed such
sorrow could never find peace again,
For the sword struck deep to mine inmost soul, and the
scar will ever remain.

"Do I love her less in these days ? Not so, for her
memory still is a sacred thing ;
Often methinks I hear her voice in the mystic chants
that the wild winds sing
When they sigh thro' the forest and over the plain
like the moan of a spirit wandering.

“Times have changed, for the tide of Progress, rolling
westward, has reached me here ;
I have crept from my shell, and mixed with men, and
grown more kindly and less austere ;
Can it be that the spell of the buried Past is slowly
lessening year by year ?

“Few are the friends I can call my own, but one have
I found out here in the West,
And a truer nobler heart than his never beat in a human
breast ;
Our stations join and my happiest hours are spent with
him as a welcome guest.

“A gaunt old man with a kingly face and a daughter
fresh as an English May ;
Like summer and winter they seem to me—the dark
brown locks and the silver gray.
Let me search my soul—Is it friendship alone that draws
my steps so oft that way ?

“Brown-eyed Edith—a child of Nature—free as the air
of her native strand ;
There are few as fair, there are none more true, none
gentler, none sweeter in all the land ;
But she lacks the grace, the imperial ease, of her I found
asleep on the sand.

“Child ! if Love should come thy way and whisper low
with his rosebud mouth—
Breathe on thy soul with the fire of his breath as fierce
and strong as the wind of the Drouth—
Ah ! thou wilt love with the passionate love that is born
of the sun and the South !

"Am I false in my thoughts to her who said, soft in my ear, 'All my soul is thine!'

False! whilst I see, thro' the haze of the past, the deathless eyes of my Margaret shine—

My dead love's eyes as I saw them last, lit with the light of a love divine?

.

"Have I grown vain with the rolling years? or have I read her secret aright?

Why has she grown so silent and strange? Why were there tears in her eyes last night?

Can it be *love* that flushes her cheek, then turns its damask to deadly white?

.

"Can it be true that Edith loves—loves with a passion as fierce and free

As that which shook the strength of my youth, years ago, by the sunny sea?

Have I pierced to the depths of her soul and read that she loves—*loves me*?

.

"Ah! I am sick of this lonely life; faint with the stress of these weary days.

I am growing gray in the wilderness; quaint, old-fashioned, in all my ways.

Can it be there is happiness yet hidden deep 'neath the shadowy haze?

.

"Can I go to her now, look in her eyes, fearlessly take her hand in mine?

And say those words which I said but once, 'O my love, all my soul is thine!'

Hypocrite! No; for the eyes of the Dead gaze on this life from the Life Divine!"

III.

“Married ! Is it the hand of Fate ? Edith and I are married at last !

Two quiet years of wedded life and I still clasp my sorrowful secret fast.

I have steeled my heart, I have said to my soul, ‘It is time to bury the Past.’

“Do I give to her as honest a love as the faithful homage she pays to me ?

She is all that is womanly, tender, and true ; she is all that a wife should be.

Trustful heart, couldst thou read my thoughts how would thy husband appear to thee ?

“Two years have flown since we stood together, sad and silent, the night he died—

Stood by his couch and watched his life ebbing away like a falling tide.

Friend ! Thou hast passed thro’ the River of Death : is there joy and peace on the farther side ?

.

“He whispered softly,—I scarce could hear—he placed her delicate hand in mine,

‘Raeburn,’ he said, with his dying breath, ‘guard her, love her, this trust is thine !

Take my wildflower unto thy heart. Thou art the oak and she is the vine.’

“Poor child ! Poor child, with her passionate heart ! Bitter and wild were the tears she shed. ?

I folded her trembling form to my breast, tender and few were the words I said.

In that darksome room our troth was plighted—hers and mine—alone with the dead.

"I stood with her at the altar of God, I swore the vow
and I bent the knee,
But I heard a voice that she could not hear, and I saw
a face that she could not see ;
For Memory rose from the Shadowy Past and stood like
a spectre over me.

.
"Am I to waste my life in dreams till Death shall me in
his arms enfold ?
Better to turn to the new love glowing than muse in
silence over the old,
Better to bury my hopeless grief deep in the grave where
her heart lies cold !

"Lo ! I will cast off, for ever and ever, all that has held
my spirit in thrall.
I will taste of the wine and honey of life ; I have lived
too long on the wormwood and gall.
I have done with the Past. I have severed the chain.
I will turn to Edith as all in all.

"Margaret ! hear—if the dead can hear the sighs of our
souls in that Life above—
Where thou standest—an angel of God—beneath the
wings of His brooding Dove !
Shall I not cleave to this womanly heart ? Have I not
vowed to cherish and love ?

"Passionate love will last for a season, wither the heart
and weary the breast ;
Is the prize for which we have striven worth all the fever
of fierce unrest ?
Love that flows like a summer river, musical, passionless,
is the best.

"Time the Merciful, Time the Healer, who takest the
sting of our sorrows away
And calmest all the unsatisfied longing, surely thou sayest
to all to-day :

'Brood no more on the things that have perished, grasp
your happiness while you may.'

"Truth sits enthroned on her pure white brow, and
Honour shines in her clear brown eyes ;
What tho' she hide the depth of her love beneath the
mask of a sober guise,
Is not the faith of a heart like hers more sweet than all
passionate memories ? "

IV.

"The Morn has come in his glorious sheen of royal
crimson and silver-gray,
And the wings of Night are spread for flight before the
shield of the armèd Day,
And the face of the Earth is lit with joy and the hills are
flushed with a roseate ray.

"For he comes like a lover whom Fate has held far away
from his loved one's side,
And his eyes are keen with the fire of his thoughts and
the fever of longings unsatisfied ;
He comes in the passion and pride of his strength to clasp
the Earth as a bride.

"Fresh and blithe is the morning air, the dew still
glitters on grass and tree ;
And the mystic spell of the wilderness, the charm of the
Bush, creeps over me.
There are times when a man can say to his soul : 'It is
happiness only *to be !*'

“ There is peace around, there is peace in my heart, as I
drive alone thro’ the silent land,
And mark once more that the Drouth is o’er and Nature,
stretching a gracious hand,
Hath changed bare plains into pastures green as tho’ by
the wave of a fairy’s wand.

“ There is peace in my heart, and a sense of joy thrills my
being and fills my breast ;
After the grief and tension of passion Happiness comes as
a welcome guest ;
After the turmoil of weary years God has given me quiet
and rest.

“ Ah ! What is that yonder ? I know those horses—the
blue-roan colts that I sold to Gray !
The Dalmora buggy, with the old man and Walter !
What can be bringing them down to-day ?
They seem in trouble—two traces broken—and the wheels
gone down in that bed of clay.

“ ‘ I’m afraid that I shall not be able to help you. I can
give you this cord to splice up the gear.
It only requires a little patience and those two colts will
soon pull you clear.
Yes. I must hurry on to the Five-mile. Caxton, of
Woodside, is coming here.

“ ‘ What did you say ? You are going there also ? Some
one expecting—waiting—for you ?
A governess coming up from the South ? She will find
this Western life something new.
I will tell her, then, from you if I see her that you will be
there in an hour or two.’

.

"Caxton not come? Without writing to tell me? Well!
I will trust in his promise no more.
Where can this governess be whom they spoke of? I can
see some one there thro' the open door.
I suppose I had better go in and explain the reason why
Gray was not here before."

v.

"I enter the room of the little inn—some one is standing
over there,
Her face in the shadow, half turned away. I can only see
she is tall and fair,
For the room seems dark as I pass within, and my eyes
are dazed by the noontide glare.

"Something familiar about the face! Calmly she moves
out into the light.
Why does she suddenly tremble and start? Why does
her cheek turn deadly white?
We stand and gaze in each other's eyes, and a mist arises
before my sight.

"We stand and gaze, but we do not speak, for the shadow
of Fate hangs overhead,
And I see once more those deep sad eyes, and the graceful
curve of that stately head.
Has she risen again in the beauty of old?—'Mine own
true love!—Not dead!—Not dead!'

"She has come to me thro' the gates of Death, and her
eyes are wet with the angels' tears;
And Heaven shall mourn—there are none more pure in
all the throng of her starry peers.
She has loved with the strength of a deathless love thro'
all the grief of the bitter years.

“ Ah ! I forget those weary years, the sword of Sorrow,
the secret pain,
I only know that I clasp her now—mine own true love—
in these arms again.
‘ O Queen of my soul ! Lift up thine eyes ! Who but
thee in my heart could reign ? ’

“ She pillows her golden head on my breast, she lifts up
her radiant eyes to mine,
And I feel the sense of their mystic power mount thro’
my brain like the fumes of wine.
They have not changed. They are still the same. Lit
with the light of a love divine.

“ It is all a dream that we parted, love. We are sitting
again on the yellow sand ;
We hear the boom of the bursting surf ; we see the white
foam flung on the strand.
It is all a dream that we parted, love. Who was it spoke
of the Western land ?

.
“ What do I say ? No dream ! No dream, but the iron
hand ’neath the velvet glove—
The iron Hand of that Destiny decreed by the Unseen
Powers above ! . . .
If loyal to Love, disloyal to Honour—untrue to all I have
sworn to love !

“ Deep and wide is the gulf that parts us. All my gain
shall but end in loss.
Thou and I on opposite banks must watch the waters eddy
and toss !
Thou and I on opposite banks—but we may not cross—
but we may not cross !

“Who shall comfort the comfortless, breathe peace to
the heart that is desolate?

Sin to covet forbidden fruit! and sin to strive 'gainst the
hand of Fate!

Given me back from the mouth of the grave——given
me back—Too late—Too late!

.

“She has told me all. I can see the truth. 'Tis written
with fire on my heart and brain.

Our letters passed thro' a villain's hands. He sold his
honour her love to gain.

He said 'He is dead,' and he wrote me a lie. We believed,
and we never wrote again.

“He loved her then? Was this the friendship he swore
to me in the days that were?

I would give the years I have yet to live only to see him
standing there,

To meet him alone——Be his strength what it may, I am
armed with the strength of mine own despair.

“We two alone where no ear could hear! We two alone
where no eye could see!

Mercy! Yea, I would mete to him the mercy he rendered
to mine and me.

I would shoot him there like a dog where he stood, tho' I
passed with him to Eternity.”

VI.

“Going to Dalmora! *She*, the new governess! *She*!
with her beauty of mind and face,

Waiting there where the coach had left her. Why was
she not met at the place?

Ah! I remember. To think that our meeting was brought
about by a broken trace!

"Trifles ! This is how Fate impending works great issues
from little things,
A random blow on a wound half healed, and Hope falls
stricken with trailing wings.
Trifles ! a careless stroke of the pick may strike the gold,
or the hidden springs.

.

"Now, I am calm. I stand once more encased in mine
armour of self-control.
Could I stem the rush of the pent-up passion surging as
waves of the Tempest roll ?
When all things else were as things forgotten, and each
sought each with the eyes of the soul !

"Back to the station ! In these few hours how all the
current of life has changed,
Flowing again in the old old channels, the hills and
valleys where once it ranged.
Back to the station ! Back to Edith, with courage failing
and faith estranged !

"To live so close—scarce twenty miles—and all our meet-
ings but grief and pain.
So near, yet so far—parted for ever. Did she not say,
'We have severed the chain ;
The Past is buried ; the book is closed, *never*, friend, to
be opened again ' ?

"Back to the station ! to take up once more the quiet
routine of daily life.
How can I look with a fearless gaze into the faithful eyes
of my wife,
The truest, tenderest wife on earth, who shall never know
of this inward strife ? "

.

VII.

"Am I so weak that I cannot say, 'I will be true what-soe'er betide,

True in action and true in thought'? Have I no honour, no manly pride?

Yes. I will honour and love to the last the woman whose place must be at my side.

"Ah! but Love is not governed by Will. Love has no law. 'Tis unfettered and free.

Canst thou stand on the yellow sand and curb the tide of the rising sea? . . .

. . . Get thee behind me, Satan, for ever. . . . Tempt me no more in my misery.

.

"Edith and she are the closest friends. She has ridden down to Dalmora to-day.

She likes her better than any one else. 'We must have the new governess over to stay,

So sweet and so sad. Such a beautiful face.' I answer and laugh in a careless way.

.

"She has come to my home, she is under my roof. My heart beats fast as I touch her glove!

Grown so fragile she seemeth to me like an angel sent from the Heavens above.

I see them yonder standing together—my wife and the woman I love.

"No! Not love! I have crushed the memory. Edith, alone, until Time shall end.

I, too, can turn from fruit forbidden; I, too, can accept what Fate may send.

'The Past is buried; the book is closed, never again to be opened, friend!'"

VIII.

"It is better to die, better to sleep, to lay down one's
burden and be at rest,
To cast off for ever the shackles of sorrow, the passions
and sins of a troubled breast,
To cross the bounds of the darksome river. Death is not
terrible. Death is best.

"I am spent with the struggle that rends my spirit and
leaves me far from the wished-for goal—
Faint with the effort to curb and weaken the strength of
the passions I cannot control,
Whilst Love and Honour like mailed knights contend for
the prize of my soul.

"Why should I strive to deceive myself? Sophist! thy
platitudes are but vain!
Turn as thou wilt from the days that were, truth will
triumph and truth will reign.
No! Thou canst *never* bury the past. No! Thou canst
never unrivet the chain.

"Then it were wiser to seek a haven where Memory's
echoes no more shall mock,
Wiser to grasp the buckler and halberd and close with
Death in a mortal shock!
The Coward's refuge!—I will not seek it—— The Ræ-
burns come of a different stock!"

Here the diary ends ; for the hand that had written, wrote
no more on the page of Time.

It is only the tale of two ruined lives ; and one has passed
to a happier clime—

Passed from the feverish dreams of Earth to the widening
vistas of Life sublime.

IX.

They found him lying—a shattered wreck—'neath splintered woodwork and broken wheel,
And his face was pale as the face of one on whom Death's Angel has set his seal,
But life still throbbed in the sinking frame, in the flaccid muscles once strong as steel.

“Bend closer, Edith. Don't cry, my darling!—Death must come to us all some day—
Who will guard you and who will keep you now that I am going away?
Closer, Edith—— I am growing fainter—— There is something yet that I wish to say.

“There is a book—a diary,—— Burn it!—Some things are better lost in the grave!
Promise me you will never read it. I have tried to be true—— I have tried to be brave——
Have I failed in my duty to you, my darling?—— Have I failed to fulfil the trust he gave?

“Ah! but who is that standing there?—— Have you brought her to see me before I die?——
Kiss me, Edith—— The shadows deepen——the light has faded out of the sky——
Margaret—give me your hand again—— The Past is buried—Good-bye—— Good-bye!” . . .

Two women are sitting, side by side; they watch the shadows that play on the wall,
And the darkness is creeping up from the East to cover the Earth like a funeral pall;
No voice is heard by the listening air and the silence of Death broods over it all.

Deep are the thoughts in the heart of each—thoughts
which they feel yet never shall say ;
Hand in hand they sit in the silence till Dawn has come
in his mantle of gray ;
But they know that their souls are bound together by the
strength of a bond that will not decay.

.
He has fallen asleep, he is buried deep in his lonely grave
'neath the Western sod ;
He will tread no more on that Unknown Shore the path
of Sorrow his feet have trod ;
He has passed to the realms of Eternal Peace "where they
are as the Angels of God."

AN ECHO.

IN the harmony of ages floating from the dreamy Past,
In the old romantic legends where the seeds of song were
cast,

In the pleasant fields of Fancy, whence the flowers of
genius sprung,

Can we find a path untrodden? Can we find a song
unsung?

Lamps of Genius burning brightly thro' the mists of
bygone days,

With the light of strong endeavour ever mingling with
their rays;

Dreams of dreamers, chants of singers made immortal in
their song,

With a soft and tender cadence, or a passion fierce and
strong,

Like the chimes from distant belfries, like the restless
winds that blow

Northwards with tempestuous fury, southwards musically
slow;

Like the thunderous roar of breakers bursting on a rocky
strand,

Or the rhythm of the river murmuring softly thro' the
land;

Sinking, rising, soaring upwards sound their melodies
sublime—

Sound the Voices of the Ages echoing thro' the Halls of
Time.

What is left us ? Shall we wander midst the fields their
feet have prest ?
Sing again the songs they sang us in their passion of
unrest ?
Sing of Nature, 'neath whose influence all the poet's
instinct stirs—
Feels the throbbing of his pulses beat in unison with
hers ;
When the Dawn's grey veil of vapour falls before the
face of Day,
And the arrows of the sunshine chase the shadowy night
away ;
Like a goddess in her splendour, robed with many a
roseate hue,
In the mantle of the morning, jewelled with the glittering
dew ?
Softer is the calm of sunset, mellower light on plain
and tree,
Placid purple clouds, like islands floating in a golden sea,
When the crimson-tinted sunlight sinks and pales in
waning rays,
And like rush of many waters, come the thoughts of
other days ;
Till the creeping mists grow deeper and the evening air
is still
With the awe of solemn shadows hanging darkly on the
hill ;
Till with wide and rapid pinions sweeps the Spirit of the
Night,
And our thoughts are carried onwards in the current of
its flight,
Through the wreathing mists of darkness where the mid-
night reigns alone
From the regions of the Finite to the bars of the Un-
known.

.

All our songs are but the echoes of the chants long
heard before,
All our loves and our ambitions like the wave-beats on
the shore,
Coming, going, passing, ending with their restless hopes
and fears,
Till at last in silence buried in the cenotaph of years.

EVENING : A FRAGMENT.

THIS is the hour of Rest ! Nature doth sleep,
Draped in the shadowy garments of the night,
And from the vast immeasurable height,
The stars of Heaven their silent vigils keep,
The emblems of Eternity. They stand,
God's sentinels, without the gates of Heaven.
This is the hour of Peace ! There is no sound.
The fitful voices of the wandering winds
Have died in hollow murmurs. Near and far
Upon the sleeping Earth, beneath, around ;
Descends the mantle of a deeper calm.
It is the Spirit of the Night that speaks—
“ A still, small voice ”—but with a magic power
It sinks into the heart, till the wild wars
Of earthly passions and corroding cares
Disperse like clouds before the rising sun.
This is the hour of Thought ! In this still hour
The nature we inherit from High God,
In conflict with our baser attributes,
Rises triumphant, bidding us prepare
For holier thoughts and higher destinies.
O Man ! If thou wouldst gauge thy littleness,
And know thine impotency, go behold
The stars of Heaven ! For if thy mind conceives,
And counts them held by beings such as we,
With hopes, ambitions, loves, akin to ours,
In what proportion dost thou find thyself

To the united millions of all worlds ?
One single grain in miles of desert sand,
One single drop in oceans wide and deep—
Such is the import and significance
Of thy small life ! For if such globes are ruled
By the same laws this earthly world obeys,
If Death has entered other spheres than ours,
Where unknown myriads have been born and died,
As we must live and die and be forgot,
Then Man's imagination cannot grasp
Nor hold such totals of immensity !
Such things are hid, nor can we raise the veil ;
Such thoughts will rise, nor can we bid them stay,
But on quick wings they bear us unawares
To vaster problems than Man's mind can solve.

ODE ON THE JUBILEE.

O QUEEN, the shadow of whose throne
O'er half the world is cast ;
Thy people's glory is thine own,
Their love for thee shall last.
Empress of Nations ! Wide and far
'Neath Southern Cross and Northern Star
Thy sons are gath'ring fast
To pay thee homage who hast been
For half a century a Queen.

Behold how strong that throne may be
Whose firm foundation stands,
Not on a despot's tyranny
Nor strength of armèd bands,
But on a People's love and trust
Of her whose reign is good and just !
Love, which the Ocean spans,
Hath bound our fealty to her throne,
Whose joys and sorrows are our own.

Not less a Queen we deemed her when
The God of Love drew near ;
And she—a ruler over men—
Bent down a listening ear ;
The robes of Empire could not hide
The beating heart of England's bride,
Nor make her choice less dear ;
Her bridal wreath and bridal gems
Seemed more to her than diadems.

And now in zenith of her sway
She sits upon the throne !
The glory of that bridal day
Is gone : she reigns alone !
Ah ! Who shall read the thoughts which pass—
Like creeping shadows o'er the grass,
When noon to eve has grown,—
Within her heart, and bring again
The Past with all its shadowy train !

Forget not, ye whose hearts are keen
To pay the homage due,
Altho' an Empress and a Queen
She is a *woman* too ;
And womanlike her thoughts will turn
From pomp and state she may not spurn
But bears with calmness through,
To those she lost who cannot see
The glory of her Jubilee.

God save her ! Hardly can be found
A life more fair and pure ;
The love of millions guard her round
And make her throne secure !
The power of noble womanhood
That bore the grief and chose the good
Shall make her name endure.
A life and reign so nobly spent,
Will be her stateliest monument.

ALONE.

THE purple hills rise far behind,
Before me spreads the plain,
The tall grass shakes beneath the wind
Like surges on the main.
Thin mists have girt each low hill's crest,
The hot sun swims in cloudless blue,
A mirage gathers in the West
And trembles into view :
It gathers in the swimming haze,
A silver lake of dazzling sheen,
Its waves are bright with dancing light
And tender tints of blue and green.
A phantom sea, calm, limpid, wide,
Sailed o'er by phantom ships !
Ah ! well I know that rippling tide
Could never cool my lips.
My tongue is swollen in my mouth,
My fevered lips are cracked and dry,
I hear the Spirit of the Drouth
Whisper : "Thou soon shalt die !"
The living shadow of a man,
The living shadow of a horse,
Thro' heat and glare, in grim despair,
We stagger on our unknown course.

Comrades, whose worth was sternly tried
In hunger, thirst, and pain,
I ne'er shall see you at my side,
Nor clasp your hands again !

Mine own weak hands scarce feel the reins,
The hot wind burns my withered cheek,
So calm, so awful are the plains
The silence seems to speak.
It almost seems to speak and say :
"Those wronged by thee demand redress,
The hour draws nigh when thou shalt die,
Alone within the wilderness !"
Thro' shimmering grasses on I ride
Across the yellow plain.
My comrades one by one have died,
And I alone remain.
They sickened one by one, and died,
The stout of heart, the strong of hand ;
Some lie upon the dark hillside,
And some upon the sand.
Where never white man trod before,
Thro' scrub, o'er plain, by mountain cleft,
We forced our way, until to-day
This horse and I alone are left.

Down ! with a long and stagg'ring stride,
The good horse falls to earth,
With staring eye and nostril wide—
Small need to loose the girth !
There's hopeless anguish in his eyes,
A rattling in his throat I hear,
"Water " is what he mutely cries,
But not a drop is near.
He feebly sniffs my sunburnt hand,
He feebly answers my caress,
Then gives one moan : I stand alone—
Alone within the wilderness !

MY LITTLE SWEETHEART.

My sweetheart is but five years old ;
She has not learnt decorum yet ;
Her cheeks are pink ; her hair like gold ;
Her eyes are violet.

And very sweet she seems to me—
A little fairy full of grace,
With all her ringlets blowing free
About her roguish face.

She pinches me, she pulls my hair,
She steals my watch to hear it tick ;
I can't exactly tell you where
She hid my hat and stick.

And oh ! she makes such " dreadful eyes "—
This little angel without wings.
Do other angels in the skies
Think of such wicked things ?

But sometimes she is very good
And sits sedately on my lap
And hears me preach (as elders should)
But doesn't care a rap.

And then she creeps up close to me,
And lays her cheek against my own,
Whilst round my neck coquettishly
Her tiny arms are thrown.

She tells me all her little cares ;
Her childish griefs, and childish joys ;
How it was *she* who stole the pears !
And how she hates the boys !

Ah ! little maid, at sweet seventeen
You will not speak your heart to me ;
You will not kiss me *then*, I ween,
Or sit upon my knee.

You will have scores of lovers *then*,
And go to dances with your mother ;
And learn to play off gentlemen—
The one against the other.

You will “ sit out ” in dusky nooks,
And flirt, and smirk, and “ take an ice,”
And think too much about your looks—
And won't be half so nice.

You will have grown a skilful hand
At drawing fish within your net ;
And few, I think, will long withstand
Those eyes of violet.

I pray, dear, you may never feel
The wrench which tears two lives apart,
The careless smiles which oft conceal
The anguish of the heart ;

That Peace may fold thee in her wings,
No thought arising, half confes't,
In spite of all that knowledge brings—
That childhood's hours were best.

THE RIVER OF DEATH.

I DREAMT that I stood by the River of Death,
And the breath of the wind was an icy breath ;
And the shades that hovered upon the bank
Heaved, and wavered, and rose, and sank.

And the shore was lit by a darkening light
Which shot thro' the Realms of Eternal Night ;
And the spell which hung on the heavy air
Was the spell of sorrow and dark despair.

Then I heard low wails, and sad echoings,
And sighs like the sweeping of heavy wings ;
But the tide rolled on, and its turbid wave,
Flowing for ever, no answer gave.

I strove to pierce thro' the distant gloom
Where the vague gigantic shadows loom ;
I strove to see to the farther shore,
But the rolling mists gathered more and more.

Then I stood on the brink, and I thought how strong,
Yet calm, that River had flowed along ;
Silent and mystical and sublime,
From the Springs of Sin on the verge of Time.

Passionless, darksome, yet ever on
It rolled thro' the ages past and gone ;
And it gathered the streams of Life as it went,
Till they one by one with its waters blent.

And I thought of the millions whose weary feet
Have stood on the brink where the shadows meet ;
Have stood in their doubt and their misery
By the River that flows to the Unknown Sea—

Of those who have heard, like a rolling drum,
The voice of the waters whisper "Come !"
For only those who are called by Death
Can hear the words which that River saith.

Like the wash of the waves on a far-off shore
They hear the sound of the black flood's roar,
And deep in the stream where the tide runs strong
Interpret the words of its mystic song.

And I said, "O River, darksome and wide,
Is there room for me on thy silent tide ?
For my soul is filled with a fierce unrest,
And I fear not the chill of thine icy breast.

"The waters of Life are bitter, I ween,
Tho' the sun shines bright and the leaves are green
But peace comes not with the spring wind's breath,
For it lies far down in thy depths, O Death !—

"Where the sin and the sorrow and fierce unrest
Are buried deep 'neath the dark wave's crest,
And the longings wild and unsatisfied
Are swept away on thy rushing tide."

Still no answer came from the gath'ring gloom
Where the vague gigantic shadows loom,
But the tide rolled on, and its turbid wave,
Flowing for ever, no answer gave.

LOVE AND AMBITION.

AMBITION, cased from head to heel
In armoured dress of glittering steel,
 Strode up a pathway narrow ;
Seeking for foes with warrior's joy,
He met a rosy little boy,
 Armed with a bow and arrow.
"Come, foolish child, and give," said he,
"That silly plaything up to me ;
 You'll harm yourself I fear."
"Nay," quoth the urchin with a grin,
"I see a chink your armour in,
 So do not come too near."
With loud contempt the giant laughed ;
Quick on the string Love placed a shaft,
 And bent his golden bow ;
The aim was swift, the aim was true.
Straight through the chink the arrow flew,
 And laid the giant low.
Dying, he raised his drooping head :
"I deemed no foe on earth," he said,
 "Could thus my breastplate pierce ;
Idiot to fail to recognize
That godlike form, those shining eyes,
 Which rule the universe."

A MEDLEY.

EASTWARD in the skies of morning rosy tinges streak the
gray,
Bars of crimson change to golden—glitt'ring heralds of
the day,
Like a blood-red shield uprising swims the sun in palest
blue,
Crowns the hills with crests of splendour, flashes on the
trembling dew ;
Till the grass seems strewn with jewels, loosely strung,
and red with dawn—
Nature's gems that gleam and quiver on the bosom of
the Morn.
Far to Eastward, far to Northward, stretch the hills in
purple chains,
Far to Southward, far to Westward, waves the grass on
yellow plains ;
Fresh and blithely blow the breezes, drive the cloud,
and move the lea
With the roll of grassy billows surging like a northern
sea.
Ah ! what mem'ries stir within me as I ride thro' scenes
like these,
Thro' the silence only broken by the voices of the
breeze.
Voices of the rushing west wind chanting anthems weird
and grand,
Mystic melodies of Nature that few hearts can under-
stand.

I have loved the voice of Nature—loved the music of
the breeze,
Sighing with a tender cadence thro' the branches of the
trees ;
Loved the triumph of the Tempest blinding flash and
deaf'ning roar,
When Heaven's batteries have opened, echoing from
shore to shore.
Soft and tender is the fancy which thro' all my being
thrills,
When the chequered lights and shadows play upon the
purple hills ;
When the burning skies to westward fade to floods of
amber light,
And the lemon tints of sunset melt into the dusks of night.
By the campfire in the silence when the light begins to
wane,
Echoes of the dead, dead voices seem to fill the air again ;
When the tall stems of the gum trees stand like sheeted
sentinels,
And the curlew's plaintive wailing sounds like weird
funereal knells ;
Grander than the noblest poem, awful in its mystery,
Is a voice from mem'ry speaking when that voice has
ceased to be.
I have sung the thoughts within me tho' the world may
sneer and say :
In the vain pursuit of shadows he has cast his life away.
Never shall he merit honour who but works for praise
alone ;
Never shall he gain a triumph who despairs when over-
thrown ;
Never shall he wear the laurel who grows dumb when
critics sting—
Whom the dread of censure silenced when the spirit
bade him sing !

On the deep sea of existence like frail barks our lives
are blown,
Where the helmsman's hand is hidden and the harbour
is unknown.
He is best and he is noblest who has kept through good
and ill
Something of his purer nature, something of his child-
hood still.
But our souls grow stained and deadened, dark with
passion, sin, and care,
And we sow the seeds of folly, reap the harvest of
despair.
When amidst the roar of combat, thrust for thrust, and
stroke for stroke,
Sabres flash from blue to crimson, hissing through the
rolling smoke ;
When the bugle note is silent, and the rushing squadrons
reel,
Meeting in a shock like thunder, crash of harness, clash
of steel,
Gladly would I fall in battle fighting in the foremost
van,
For the sword of Sorrow pierceth deeper than the sword
of Man.
Idle thought ! To deem that dying thus could expiate
our sin,
That the soul could with the body perish in the battle's
din.
Death is but the gloomy portal to the realms of the
Unknown,
Where the laws that rule all Nature centre in one law
alone !
In the light beyond the Shadow, in that light beyond
the light,
Where the secrets of existence flash at last upon the
sight ;

In the deep beyond the distance, in the sphere beyond
the spheres,

Truth has hid the golden keynote to the mysteries of
years.

Ah ! I doubt not that hereafter we shall pass from change
to change,

All the spirit growing finer, all the thought with wider
range ;

On from region unto region where no mist our vision
mars,

Till we see with perfect insight in some life beyond the
stars.

There are deeper myst'ries hidden in the frailest flowers
that blow

Than in all the lore of ages, all that greatest thinkers
know.

Deem not tho' the flowers are withered that they will
not come again ;

Winter sees them fade and perish, Spring will bring
them with the rain.

Deem not tho' we pass in silence that we pass for ever-
more—

Here we only grope in darkness wand'ring by an un-
known shore.

Death will make us heirs of knowledge and unroll before
the sight

Vistas of eternal splendour widening thro' the Infinite.

FREDERICK III.

OBIIT JUNE 15, 1888.

“ His life was gentle ; and the elements
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, this was a man.”

—SHAKESPEARE.

ON lordly terrace, and on palace wall,
An awful silence crept ;
With noiseless footsteps up the columned hall
An unseen presence swept—
God's angel, Azrael, whom men call Death,
Breathed on the monarch with his icy breath.

And as he passed, grasping his viewless brand,
The shadow of his wings
Darkened the eagles of the Fatherland,
From peasants unto kings
Rolled, like deep murmurs of a funeral drum
Thro' the wide world, a voice, “ The end has come ! ”

The world is German in this common grief ;
She mourns the man alone.
Above the diadem, the laurel leaf,
The sceptre, and the throne,
She sees the hero-soul ; and manhood's pride
Is nobler such a man has lived and died.

Look not upon the monarch but the man
Whom Death at length has freed.
Hero of nobler victories than Sedan !
The grandeur of whose creed
The world saw, and the world-wide whisper ran,
" Above the pride of kings, this was a man."

A FEDERAL SONG.

THEY lay the stone whose eyes may never see
A Nation's turrets rise above the plain.
They sow the seed who may not reap the grain ;
Futurity
Will bless that toil which wrought thro' stress and
strain,
Her Unity.

It yet shall be. Build on, and heed not scorn ;
Build fair and strong a nation's towering height ;
In massy grandeur weld her scattered might
By schism torn.
After the darkness and the Dawn's gray light
Cometh the Morn.

Build on ! Build on ! Hold with a nerve of steel,
Above all meaner pride and jealous hate,
That higher faith which makes a nation great.
They rightly feel
Who take for the broad basement of the State
The Common-weal.

Build on ! Build on ! Deep-pulsing thro' the land,
Thro' all this island-continent there stirs
A throb, a voice, she feels, and knows is hers,
From strand to strand
A whisper stealing thro' the Dawn avers
The hour at hand.

Build on ! Build on ! E'en as the restless blue
Circles her sleeping mountains, silence-bound,
Our hope, our faith, our love shall gird her round
 With fealty true,
Whilst from the old-world wrecks which strew the
 ground,
 We build anew.

ORPHEUS TO EURYDICE.

THERE is no joy in Heaven if Love be not,
But, if we love, this Earth may yet be Heaven.
For what is Hell or Heaven but seed we sow,
Grown to maturity, within the soul ?
This is the law of Nature and the gods—
That each be free to act, yet by his acts
Achieve his misery or happiness.
Then choose we Heaven. Let Duty temper love ;
For thro' its iron gate and flinty path
We reach the happy meadows, and, beyond,
The Highest Good ; and, if that path be rough,
Deep-shadowed, dreary, 'tis not all so dark
But Love can light it ; for the soul that grasps
Love only, spurning duty, knows not Love,
But passion, which consumes the soul and leaves
A Hell within it. Therefore, O my Love,
Choose we the better part. Let passion be ;
And, if our lot be lowly, and our lives
The common round of petty care and toil,
Who is there that would choose voluptuous ease,
Feeling his manhood in him ; and his heart
Strong to resist the buffets of the world,
The long stern struggle, and the frequent fall ?
For in the toil and in the strife alone
We find our strength, until at last we stand
High on Olympus, even as the gods.
There shall we gaze back at the years and know

'Twas for the best. Ah! in a world like ours
There is no obstacle but falls before
The strength of an indomitable will
Linked to a love like thine. Come thou to me.
My soul is thine. Thou art my destiny.
The gods have whispered it. Thro' all this Life
Thy soul and mine are wedded, and beyond,
Thro' Death, to the Hereafter, Love shall lead
And we shall follow. It is Destiny.
No change can alter and no power avert
The Unseen Hand that gathers where it will
Two lives, and welds them in one living love.

ODE ON THE AUSTRALIAN CENTENARY.

GIRT with the wreathing mists
And shadows of the night,
Dark-robed, Australia lay
And waited for the light ;
And heard the night wind whisper soft and clear :
“ Land of the Southern Cross, the Dawn is near !
The Dawn is near ! ”

Soft in the Eastern skies,
Flushing the summer sea,
She saw her morning rise—
The morn of Liberty.
Then sang the wind across the ocean's foam :
“ Land of the Southern Cross, the Dawn has come,
The Dawn has come ! ”

Blest with God's grace divine,
Queen of the Southern Sea !
Bright shall thy glory shine,
Great shall thy future be.
Our hope, our faith, our love, on Him we cast.
“ Land of the Southern Cross, the Dawn is past,
The Dawn is past ! ”

Past with its quivering rays—
Forecasts of things to be !
Past to the riper days
Of larger Liberty !
Then sing, ye summer seas that guard our home :
“ Behold ! The Dawn is past ! The Day has come,
The Day has come ! ”

MARY MAGDALENE.

A CHILD of sin and crowned with shame
Unto the Master's feet she came ;
From shapely head to ankle bare
Fell the broad ripples of her hair ;
And for a soft and radiant dress
She wore her loveliness.

A perfect form, a faultless face,
Fairer than sculptor's art could trace ;
Ripe as the full rose in its prime
Ere yet it feels the touch of Time ;
But now with suppliant eyes she stood—
The type of fallen womanhood.

Meekly she stood, whose wanton pride
Had flung all purity aside ;
Whose lips had tasted poisonous wine—
The deadly vintage of that vine
Whose green and comely branches bear
The fruit of Passion and Despair.

Silent she stood, with weary feet,
And heart whose joy had ceased to beat ;
For all the charms that Pleasure brought
Calmed not the maddening voice of thought,
The fierce unrest, the cruel pain,
Of one who hopes—and hopes in vain.

The sunshine wrapt her in its fold
And tinged her burnished hair with gold ;
On silken lashes, darkly hung,
The beaded tear-drops, trembling, clung ;
She seemed more fair in her despair
Than ever in the days that were.

No gift she brought—yet one complete—
Who washed with tears the Master's feet.
She gave a gem of priceless worth
Above the jewels of the Earth ;
For, with true faith, and eyes with sorrow dim,
She gave her heart to Him.

THE BAR IMMUTABLE.

In the long lingering hours when Earth lies hid
In robes of darkness, and the night has come
To reign alone in calm sweet majesty,
When Sleep on ærial wing has fled away
And given no solace to the throbbing brain,
Oft have I trod the corridors of Thought
And watched, as from the tombs of Memory
The ghosts of long dead years arise and pass
In slow procession—erstwhile, Kings of Time,
But now dethroned, discrowned, and sceptreless ;
Shrouded in silence and in mystery.
Glide on, ye Phantom Monarchs of the Past,
In solemn grandeur ! From the sepulchres
That fringe the burial ground of centuries
Gray rolling clouds and misty damps arise
Wherein vivific currents flash and dart ;
As meteors crossing the ethereal blue
At dazzling speed—for one swift instant crown
The brow of night with splendid aureole ;
So flashes Memory's lightning thro' the Past
Whitening the shadows, 'till all luminous
The vista stretches, and the eye discerns
The half-forgotten scenes, the moving throng
Of old familiar faces : All that *was*
But nevermore again on Earth *shall be*.
With solemn steps I pace the paths I trod
In youth's sweet spring, when inexperienced thought

Pictured the Future as a pleasant dream
And gilded life with rich deceptive hue ;
I hear again soft and reverberant
The echoes of dead voices in the air ;
And all the good and evil of long years
Is mirrored in the glass of Retrospect.
But what avails it, if we ever thus
Stand gazing down the misty aisles of thought
And robe our lives with Mem'ry's fantasies ?
Time's rushing flood has reached and passed them by,
And still sweeps on. For who and what can stand
Before the force of that resistless flood ?
All, all, go down before it. Beauty, Age,
The golden dreams of Youth, fair Fancy's halls,
The airy castles proud Ambition built,
Swept at its touch to cold Oblivion's shore.
The mystery of Life hangs o'er my soul
In weighted horror. For what shall we gain
If by long arduous pilgrimage we reach
The highest pinnacles of human thought ?
'Tis but the limit which our faculties
May touch but not exceed : The key of Death
Alone can ope the gates of the Unseen.

.
A higher gift than reason must be ours
Ere we can comprehend that germ of life
Which permeates Nature, understand the Pow'r
That rules ethereal principalities,
Makes chaos worlds, conceives eternities.
Rough lies the path, dim-lighted, and beyond—
The dark Unknown : That bar immutable,
At which our thoughts in weak confusion pause
And beat their wings against the gates of Heaven.

RETROSPECTION.

ALONE she stood, with careless grace,
Like one whose thoughts were far away :
Upon her tender girlish face
I watched the lights and shadows play ;
I watched the fringes of her eyes
Sweep her soft cheek ; and overhead
From the calm heights of summer skies,
Thro' leafy boughs the sunbeams spread ;
Nor could I judge which seemed most fair,
The sunshine or her golden hair.

Around her feet the violets grew ;
Above her head the woodland birds
Made music in a key so true,
I would not change it into words.
'Twas Nature's song in Nature's scene,
And she was Nature's fairest flower ;
And that which *is* and might have been
Were all unthought of in that hour.
I had not learnt, I did not guess,
How joy can turn to bitterness.

The Past is gone. The rolling years
Have brought their pleasures and their pain ;
And change, and manhood's hopes and fears,
Will chase such phantoms from the brain.

Our lives in different grooves are cast,
And she has other cares to bear ;
The misty curtain of the past
Divides us from the days that were.
Yet through the haze I often see
That face which once was all to me.

It may be that the influence
Of those old days hangs round me still ;
It may be that a finer sense
Will guard the hand from deeds of ill ;
It may be that, if aught of good
My life has shown or tried to show,
If aught of suffering was withstood
With seeming patience, all I owe
To her I loved, whose memory brings
The thoughts of nobler purer things.

Scoff not at youth. In youth alone
Our thoughts are pure, our hearts are true ;
For then we have not learnt to own
How vain the phantoms we pursue.
And what is life, and what is man,
Without that freshness of the heart
Which once was ours, but never can
Return when youth and faith depart ?
Time gives us much, but who will say—
As much as all it takes away.

IN THE BIG WARD.

A WAN white cheek on the pillow lying ;
A fevered gleam in the dark brown eye ;
Not twelve years old—and the boy is dying
Inch by inch as the days roll by !

Inch by inch as the days are fleeting
The young life drifts where its pain shall cease,
Where the weary heart shall stay its beating,
And the soul shall sleep 'neath the wings of Peace.

In the white-washed ward there are faces dreary,
Low moans of anguish and laboured breath ;
But none so patient and yet so weary
As the child who lies there waiting for death.

Men scorn thee, Death, amidst squadrons crashing,
When the red steel leaps in the strong right hand ;
Men hold it but gain when sabres are flashing
To die for their faith and their Fatherland.

Men face thee, Death, with a nerve unshaken,
On the deadly breach in the fortress wall ;
But bravest he who by hope forsaken
Endures like the child in this white-washed hall.

Ah ! Why must the children suffer and languish,
And wince and quiver beneath thy thong ?
Why crush, O Death, with thy terrible anguish
The pure young lives that have done no wrong ?

'Tis hard to know that the strong are dying,
Yet manhood and death may be reconciled ;
But O 'tis harder to hear the sighing,
And watch the pangs, of a helpless child !

Friend ! Who knows in the dim hereafter
If shall be meted to him again
For tears and anguish, sweet love and laughter,
A cycle of joy for a season of pain ?

But this we know—that the curse primeval,
Which strikes alike at the weak and strong,
Spares not the children, who did no evil,
But stays their laughter and stills their song.

IN MEMORIAM.

(VIOLA, A TALENTED CONTRIBUTOR TO *The Queenslander*,
WAS LATELY DROWNED AT SEA.)

SWEET is the sleep of Death that brings
Release from life, relief from pain ;
Where Trouble's joyless echoings
Can never reach the ear again ;
But the white wings of Peace are spread
Like Angel's pinions overhead.

Sleep on ! where the dark billows roll
And the sea-breezes whisper low ;
Sleep on ! Beyond our weak control
A deeper wisdom wills it so ;
What men call Death is but the shadowy night
Which links the Finite with the Infinite.

Deep be thy sleep, beyond all pain ;
Nor doubt that in the Spheres above
The majesty of Death shall wane
Beside the majesty of Love.
Tho' Death may pluck the purest flowers and best,
'Tis but that God may fold them closer to His breast.

DEATH.

O DEATH, and must thy marble hand
Be laid upon each human heart ?
Can none dispute thy dread command,
All-powerful tyrant that thou art ?
Seeming afar, but ever near—
A sword suspended overhead,
How slight the causes can appear
Which hurl the sword and part the thread !
And often in the early spring,
When hope is young and life is sweet,
Is seen the shadow of thy wing,
Is heard the echo of thy feet.
And oft thou comest unawares,
When life is in its summer prime,
Turning our pleasures into cares
And summer into winter time ;
Seeming afar, but ever near—
So when at length our parting breath
We yield Thee—in another sphere
Thou giv'st us Life, Almighty Death.

THREE YEARS AGO.

Not many years have passed away
 Since last I saw that gentle face ;
 Not many years !
To those whose hearts are light and gay
 The time of such a little space
 Swift disappears.
But those few years have been to me
A weary blank eternity.

Three years ago ! I knew you then,
 You were the fairest of the fair ;
 Three years ago !
Your beauty stirred the hearts of men,
 They said none could with yours compare ;
 I loved you so,
I felt with pride my bosom swell
To hear her praised I loved so well.

Where beauties grew like comely flowers,
 Your stately grace outshone them all,
 Like some sweet rose
Which from the sheltering leafy bowers
 Has climbed the garden wall,
 And lovelier grows ;
Blooms Queen amongst the roses there,
Sweet like her sisters, but more fair.

You thought it was a boyish dream
That future years would drive away ;
Three years have past.
That years like centuries can seem,
That weeks seems years, an hour a day,
I know at last ;
But still my "boyish dream" remains,
Still in my heart thine image reigns.

"Come what come may !" I know that now
For ever thou art lost to me,
In three short years.
To Fate's relentless law I bow,
And wish all happiness to thee,
Till Death appears
With lightning stride or footstep slow ;
I love you as "Three Years Ago."

TO NINA.

NINA, if a heart be true
 Whatsoever it endures,
Faithful as the skies are blue,
 Nina, then that heart is yours.
If I sought a friend to find
 (When my friends were far and few)
Loving, pitiful, and kind,
 Nina, I should turn to you.

Think not, tho' the Ocean wide,
 Restless, seething, rolls between,
Those upon the farther side
 Your devotion have not seen.
Think not tho' Pacific's tide
 Keeps you hidden from our view
That we, as the seasons glide,
 Think less lovingly of you.

You have proved your love to be
 No mere empty hollow form
But a stout old oaken tree
 Which can weather any storm.
And, as years roll on, its root
 Shall but gain a firmer hold.
Friendships like the juice of fruit
 But grow mellow when they're old.

And tho' now Australia's sky
Forms our starry canopy,
Yet our thoughts will often fly
To our home beyond the sea.
In a race the winning steed
Boldly all the fences clears,
So our thoughts like coursers speed
And outstrip the crawling years.

And when Time has done his worst,
And our heads are old and gray,
Some of us our chains have burst,
And those left care not to stay ;
When a mound and hollow urn
Tells the world we are no more,
Friendship's torch will brighter burn,
Nina, on another shore !

LINES ON THE DEATH OF LONGFELLOW.¹

THE singer mute, the lyre unstrung,
Dust—first from off earth's bosom sprung—
 To earth return !
Yet a great quenchless torch of song,
Lit by no feeble hand, shall strong
 For ever burn.

Its light shall shine from strand to strand,
And, blazing o'er that Western land,
 The ocean span ;
And great posterity shall read
The tenets of a Christ-like creed—
 Goodwill to man.

And though within the grave they lay
An earthly tenement of clay,
 And mourn thy loss,
Thou standest by thy Master's side
Who for thy sake was crucified
 Upon the cross.

Far truer honour than the wreath
Of sadly coloured laurel leaf,
 Which decks thy tomb,
Was the great throb of sympathy
For all those near and dear to thee,
 In this—their gloom.

¹ The poet died on the 27th of February, 1882.

CHRISTMAS.

ONCE more breaks the joyous morning !
Christmas Day is here !
Once more see the welcome dawning
Of a glad New Year !
Once more gather round the entrance
Of the church's door,
Rich and poor, and proud and lowly,
Strong and weak, the meek, the holy ;
Gathered there to worship Him whom heaven and earth
adore.

Happy faces ! Bright reflections
Of the hearts within ;
Faces showing stern corrections
For some former sin ;
Faces aged, and worn, and weary ;
Faces young and fair,
Faces beautiful from sorrow,
Faces careless of the morrow,
Faces gloomy, sad, and thoughtful,
All are there.

CHRISTMAS.

WITH sweet memories, kindly faces
Thronging joyous in his train ;
Thro' the world Old Christmas paces,
Binds us with a golden chain,
Chains of Love and bonds of Friendship, fetters firm yet
light to bear,
And before his face the shadows fade and vanish into air.

Yet amidst our Christmas gladness
Comes a feeling deep and wide,
Runs a vein of tender sadness
Like some zephyr o'er the tide,
As we speak with softened voices and a secret cruel pain
Of those hearts we loved, whom Christmas nevermore will
greet again.

Not for long and not for ever
Is our sojourn here below ;
Sorrows throng and Death will sever
Hearts which no dissensions know ;
Yet while we remember sadly those we ne'er shall see
again
Let us keep a hearty greeting for the friends who still
remain.

Then with gentle tact, not wrongly,
Put aside the vacant chair,
Not because we feel less strongly,
That the loved one is not there ;
But because Life lies before us and we all must bear our
load,
And we needs must cheer each other for we climb a
rugged road.

Shall we vex our dear ones living
By our mem'ries of the Dead ?
Shall we sadden this thanksgiving
By the fruitless tears we shed ?
If the spirit be Eternal, Death and Sorrow, what are they
But the gates unbarred which open upwards to the larger
Day ?

THE UNKNOWN LAND.

CHRISTMAS again ! With a solemn tread
Comes the Monarch old and gray,
To join the years that are gone and dead,
The hopes that have passed away ;
And with mournful eyes I watched him stand
On the shadowy verge of that Unknown Land.

His brow was not crowned with the silver frost,
He wore not his robe of snow ;
His wreaths of holly-tree were lost,
And his wand of mistletoe ;
But in emerald robes of leaf and moss
He stood 'neath the light of the Southern Cross.

And heavy the burden the old man bore
On his shoulders wide and vast,
To the tomb of the years that have gone before,
To the silent shades of Oblivion's shore,
To the Sepulchre of the Past ;
The thought, the faith, the hope, the fear,
Of millions were laid on the dying year.

And I said : " Old man, with the beard of snow,
And the dim and failing eyes,
Where are the friends of long ago,
Who have learnt the secret we do not know ;
And shall they yet arise
To greet us again with outstretched hand
On the shadowy shores of that Unknown Land ? "

Then in solemn tones the seer replied :

“ All things must pass away ;
But those who strive to stem the tide,
Who bear in labour side by side
The burden of the day,
Shall grasp again on that silent shore
The hands of those who have gone before.”

He was gone, but I did not see him go

In his green and leafy dress ;
For I sat and thought of the care and woe
In many a home that I used to know ;
And the joy and happiness
Which Death removes with unsparing hand,
But which God restores in that Unknown Land.

TO BRENDA SLEEPING.

(FROM "LORAINÉ," AN UNPUBLISHED POEM.)

O PEACE ! Kiss her eyes with thy wings, let her
slumbers be sweet

And calm 'neath the shadow of pinions majestic and
still,

With dreams like the music of waters in rhythmical beat,
And guard her for ever from sorrow and shield her from
ill ;

From the taint of my love, from the passion and quench-
less unrest,

The storm of despair which is rising tumultuous and
fierce !

O Peace, if thy wings have for ever forsaken my breast,
Fold them closer around her like shields which no
sorrow can pierce !

LANCELOT.

I SEE thro' mists of dark despair,
Her stately form arise ;
The glimmer of her golden hair
The radiance of her eyes.
Mercy is thine, Immortal Powers !
O make her soul, beyond the skies,
Pure as the amaranthine flowers
That bloom in Paradise.
My soul conceived the deadly sin,
And on *my* soul let vengeance fall.
I bow the knee to Heaven's decree—
But in Thy love forgive her all.

Too late ! Too late ! for hope or prayer !
My eyes grow glazed and weak,
I stagger in the blinding glare,
Too faint at last to speak ;
My soul is sick and dark within ;
A voice is pealing thro' the air :
“ Who sow the deadly seeds of sin
Shall only reap despair.”
And, stricken by that awful voice,
I sink upon the burning sod ;
And in the Fate for which I wait,
I recognize the hand of God.

LOVE AND FAME.

NIGHT shook o'er Earth her raven locks,
Black clouds had curtained all the sky ;
And with long sighs and bursting shocks,
The restless winds went roaring by.

A sculptor sat in loose attire,
With dreamy eyes fixed on the blaze ;
Within the glowing heart of fire
He saw the scenes of other days.

In many a line from wall to wall
The blocks of milk-white marble stood ;
Cupids, and stalwart knights and tall,
And types of lovely womanhood.

Pale was his face, and thin with care—
None sought to buy his works of Art ;
The darkness of a grim despair
Was spreading slowly o'er his heart.

" Alas ! " he sighed, " no man may be
A prophet in his native land ;
Or Fate has laid her curse on me,
And marred the cunning of my hand.

" And she I love says ' Love is dead,'
And laughs to scorn my dreams of Fame ;
The light of other days has fled,
And left me only care and shame.

"I cannot carve upon the stone
The vision that I see in air—
The face of her I love alone,
The face that haunts me everywhere.

Then in his ear a whisp'ring voice
Spake softly : "Carve upon the stone
The angel vision of thy choice—
The face of her thou lov'st alone.

"Carve thou Love's Angel, sweet and fair,
With deathless face and wings outspread,
The Power that rules us everywhere ;
And she will say—'Love is not dead.' "

Then from his seat the sculptor rose ;
The fadeless light of genius shone
Upon his brow. With skilful blows
He wrought upon the milk-white stone.

And slowly from the stone there grew
The outlines, mystical and grand ;
And, tho' unseen to mortal view,
An angel sped the sculptor's hand.

Long hours he wrought with steadfast face
Till the dim grays of morn flushed clear ;
Noon passed, and twilight grew apace,
And Night's dark pinions hovered near.

And still he wrought, and when the Dawn
Crowned the blue hills with roseate light,
Bathed in the glory of the morn—
Love's Angel shone in spotless white,

With deathless face, and wings outspread ;
And smiling, from the milk-white stone,
Her face who said that Love was dead—
The face of her he loved alone,

But made divine. He gazed, and knew
The vision he had seen in air ;
Then on the ground his chisel threw,
And slept beside the Angel there,

Slept long and sound—a dreamless sleep—
The sleep of Death. And she who said
“ Love is no more ” crept there to weep,
“ O my true love, Love is not dead.”

.
Night shook o'er Earth her sable locks ;
Black clouds had curtained all the sky,
And with long sighs and bursting shocks
The restless winds went roaring by.

The wild winds sang : “ When Death shall free
The throbbing brain, the toiling hand,
Then, *only then*, a man may be
A prophet in his native land.”

THE SINGER.

SHE sang of Hope, of happy days,
Of glorious spring and summer's prime ;
Softer than old-time minstrels' lays
Uprose that melody sublime.

She sang of Faith, of firm resolve,
Of strong unwavering constancy ;
To trust and live till death should solve
The problem of life's mystery.

She sang of Death—that sceptre grim—
Of pain, and age, and faltering gait ;
Of eyes once bright, now faint and dim ;
Of hearths and homes made desolate.

She sang of Love ; and as she sang
Her colour came and went again ;
No words can tell how clearly rang
The cadence of that sweet refrain.

She sang no more ; for on that night
There came a shadow and a gloom
Which hid the singer from our sight,
And hung around a darkened room.

And now she sings where angels sing
A nobler song in spheres above ;
Where Death no more can enter in,
And Hope and Faith are lost in Love.

But from the echoes of the past
Her voice comes ringing back again,
To tell the hearts who knew her last
That Hope and Faith and Love remain.

DISCONTENT.

Does the daily round seem dreary ?
Does the path of life seem rough ?
Do we find our steps grow weary,
Thinking we have toiled enough ?
In the west
Looms the stormy cloudy weather
With no shining silver lining,
Soul and body tire together ;
All we feel—a yearning pining
But for rest.
Cease my soul this sinful sighing ;
Is thy path to be all roses ?
Prizes won without the trying ?
Pleasures where no cross opposes
What you will ?
Is another's lot so sunny
That thou need'st must thus repine
Is the corn and oil and honey
To be nobody's but thine ?
Peace ! Be still !
'Tis the path we all must follow,
'Tis the common destiny ;
Pleasure's prizes are but hollow,
Sweet delusive mockery.
Time doth teach

Life is meant to be not pleasures,
Not all dull laborious toil,
But two happy blended measures
Acting as a counterfoil
Each to each.

There are stars whose rays have never
Reached this world of sin and sorrow ;
Travelling onward, travelling ever,
Still their advent is to-morrow,
Still to-morrow !

Through immeasurable spaces,
Through the voids all uncreated,
Past the high eternal places,
Still their advent must be dated,
" Still to-morrow."

Like the starlight which is roaming
Earthwards, though without our view,
Perhaps to-morrow in life's gloaming
Some glad change may come for you—
As the ray,
Long deferred and long expected,
Seems a brighter hue to borrow
From the hopes of years reflected
In its advent—not " to-morrow,"
But " to-day."

There are silent depths of ocean
Which no sounding line can measure,
Airy regions where the motion
Of the kingly eagle's pinions
Is unknown.

The vast secrets which are hidden,
Like some deeply buried treasure,
All shall solve when they are bidden,
To death's drearish dominions—
But alone !

There are secret workings hidden,
In the dull monotony ;
Though foreknowledge is forbidden,
Veiled from human scrutiny.
Leave to One
Who can comprehend our yearnings—
Human weakness, doubt, and sorrow—
All thy passionate heart-burnings :
He will not forget thy morrow
When thy work is done.

VÂLÈ.

WITHIN my soul I hear the strain—
The cadence of a song which tells
That Life is mingled joy and pain,
And made of greetings and farewells.
Ever the currents of Life's tide
Flow thro' the channels Fate has made
O'er plain, by rugged mountain-side,
And now in sunshine, now in shade.
I pray the Unseen Hand may steer
Your course through life with face serene,
With deeper joys from year to year,
Where Care's dark shadows are not seen.
If Northern skies should seem bereft
Of that which makes the Southern fair,
Our sun has kissed your eyes and left
Its rays of softened glory there.
So do not say you fear to dwell
Where skies are grey and winds are chill
The radiance of a sunnier clime
Will linger round your presence still.
And when through other scenes you roam
And other voices greet your ear,
Your thoughts at times may wander home
To dwell with some who miss you here ;
Then if my "rude untutored lines"
By chance offend not, let them be
As links within a chain which binds
My homage to your memory.

Life is a maze where paths entwine
But to diverge as Fortune tends
Until we pass that trembling line
Where Love begins and Friendship ends.
And still within my soul I hear
That song's sweet melancholy swell,
And all that I will whisper, dear,
Is simply greeting and—Farewell !

AUSTRALIA MILITANT.

(WRITTEN ON THE DEPARTURE OF THE AUSTRALIAN
TROOPS FOR THE SOUDAN.)

BLOW soft, ye southern breezes, blow ! For see
How bright the star which guards our destiny
Sheds its soft ray !

Sail on, ye warriors, on your northward course,
And bear the banner of the Southern Cross
Far in the fray

Where the old war-worn standard waves, and dare—
Beside those glorious folds—to plant it there !

When furious and fast the battel runs,
Australia's eyes will watch her soldier sons ;

When through the haze
Of battle clouds the dusky hordes appear,
Australia's sons will hold her honour dear.

Should glory's rays
Shine where the southern banners proudly wave,
Then not in vain her chivalry she gave !

When the swift-shooting spear and hissing ball
Sing through the thinning ranks, and comrades fall ;

When like the blast
Bursts the wild charge upon the square again—
Bursts like a flood the human hurricane ;

Then stern and fast
In the dread breach may Young Australia stand,
Firm as the mountains of her native land !

THE SHEPHERD'S LAST SLEEP.

In the old log hut the shepherd lay,
His fevered cheek by the hot wind fanned ;
And he dreamt of the dear ones far away,
And the fields and the flowers of his native land.

And o'er his face crept a tender smile
As he dreamt of one who was dearer still,
And the stately home in his native isle.
Ah ! if dreams could only their vows fulfil !

To the old log hut by the lonely creek
With naked sword came the Angel of Death ;
Pale grew the sleeper's hectic cheek
As he felt the touch of that icy breath.

In the lonely bush in a far-off land,
Where the wattles bloom and the brigalows wave ;
Laid to his rest by a stranger's hand,
The exile sleeps in his nameless grave.

SUBMISSION.

EACH thinks no trial harder than his own ;
Each thinks his cross the heaviest is to bear ;
There are no hearts where sorrow is unknown,
And care is everywhere.
There is no sweet without some bitter sting—
No rose without a thorn ;
The man who shall not know what anguish is,
Is yet unborn.
Yet some there be who murmur at their lot,
And waste their strength in striving to be free ;
Some who, impatient, crave they know not what,
And brood in vain o'er what can never be.
And some there be who round their fetters twine
A garland of fresh leaves and roses fair—
Brave hearts, who struggle on and ne'er repine,
And gladness carry with them everywhere.
Oh, restless, seething mass !—Humanity !
Borne down, yet struggling on in mute despair !
There is no cross which man on earth hath borne
Which man still cannot bear.

MARION RAYNE.

THE roses have climbed up the garden wall,
But one hangs highest above them all—
The sweet Queen-Rose on her slender stem,
With the morning dew for a diadem ;
As her delicate leaves to the sun she spreads
The roses beneath her must hang their heads,
Sweet Marion Rayne !

The lilies that float on the still lagoon
Are pale as the rays of the crescent moon,
And I strove to judge, with a sweet despair,
Which was the fairest that floated there ;
An equal homage I paid to each,
Till I spied one floating beyond my reach—
Sweet Marion Rayne !

The violets lie thick in their modest bed,
And sweet on the air is the scent they shed ;
I have plucked the flowers that you love the best
To lie on the heaven of your tender breast ;
But the sweetest flower in the tiny sheaf
I found concealed 'neath a shady leaf,
Fair Marion Rayne !

It is high to reach to the red red rose ;
The water looks deep where the lily grows ;

But tell me, dear, may the lily rare,
Or the rose, be plucked if a heart can dare?
Must the fairest flower that Nature made
Bloom on alone till her beauties fade,
Sweet Marion Rayne?

Is it pride that shines in your deep dark eyes,
And makes your soft bosom sink and rise?
Is it love or pride that has blanched your cheek—
That trembles on lips which refuse to speak?
And why is your face so cold and set?
Is true love hid like the violet,
Sweet Marion Rayne?

SAILING.

AH ! How freshly blew the breezes
As they bore us from the shore !
All that pleasure's senses pleases
Lingers round those days of yore.
As our snow-white lateen sail
Bellied out before the wind,
And our boat beneath it reeling
Onward rushed until 'twas heeling
Almost o'er ;
And we flew before the gale
And the white waves roared behind.

When you raised your voice to sing
In a key so strong and true,
E'en the sea-birds on the wing
Seemed to pause and list to you.
Deep the meaning of your song
Rolled into mine inmost soul ;
All the ocean air was ringing
With the sweetness of your singing,
And my secret kept so long
Burst at last from my control.

YOU AND I.

(SONG FROM "LORAINÉ," AN UNPUBLISHED POEM.)

WE met, you and I, in the morning fair
When the sun shone bright and the skies were blue.
No shadow of sorrow, no thought of care
Had chilled the breath of the summer air,
And my soul went out to you—
Went out with a fierce and passionate beat,
Went out with a fervent and quivering heat,
A love that was tender and true.

We parted, Love, in the twilight grey,
When the mists had gathered over the sea.
And I knew that the Dawn of another day,
The sheen on the sea, and the strong sun's ray,
Could bring no happiness back to me.
Ah ! What is there left but grief and pain
For the heart that loves—and loves in vain !

But I pray in my grief that thy life may be
Crowned with the joy of a shadowless calm.
And my heart will follow thee over the sea
For my soul is linked with thy destiny
To guard from sorrow and shield from harm,
Tho' my love is nothing to thee.
Tho' the love that I crave for thou canst not give—
And I ask for nought or thy whole heart's store—
The love that I bear thee will blossom and live
When my soul has passed to the Unknown Shore ;
The love that I bear thee will blossom and live
When Time and Sorrow shall be no more.

THE CHURCHYARD OF THE SEA.

FULL many a fathom buried deep
In silent rest they lie ;
In Ocean's coral caves they sleep
To 'wait eternity—
Whose lives—the Brave—the True—the Free—
Were swallowed in the angry sea ;
Who now have found a calmer rest
In Ocean's breast.

'Midst shattered wrecks, 'midst treasure vast,
The sunken wealth of ages past,
They slumber side by side ;
Captains and tars before the mast,
The husband and the bride ;
The brother bold, the sister dear,
The hoary sage, the buccaneer,
The meek, the sons of Pride :
Death knows of no distinctions here
Beneath the rolling tide !

And when our time shall come to learn
O grave ! thy mystery,
Where can our bones find fitter urn
Than in thy depths, O Sea ?
To lie beneath the restless wave
Far in some hidden ocean cave
With these—the Free—the True—the Brave—
Until eternity ;
And let the tranquil voiceless deep
Our secrets keep.

LOVE'S AMBUSH.

WHEN first the little God of Love,
Descending from the skies above,
Alit on earth, he closed his wings
And gazed around on earthly things ;
Then sought with eagerness to find
A dwelling suited to his mind.
Full long he sought with cheerless face,
Nor found the wished-for resting-place ;
Till, almost sinking with despair ;
He spied a woman, young and fair.
Quick, with a cry of glad surprise,
Love ran and hid in woman's eyes ;
Ambushed in those sweet eyes he lay,
And shot his arrows every way ;
Of many a *spark* his target made,
On many a heart his arrows played ;
So strong his bow, so true his aim,
He changed each *spark* into a *flame* ;
But flames to fiercer flames soon turned
And while the furnace brightly burned,
The wicked imp enjoyed the fun
And laughed to think what he had done.
My friend, if you'd be good and wise,
Gaze not too long in woman's eyes.
But if you needs must gaze—Beware !
The God of Love may still be there !

LOVE'S CONQUEST.

I SEE them gather for the fight
 Beneath the castle wall ;
Full many a bold and doughty knight
Who shall, before the evening's light,
 Within th' arena fall ;
But now each in his pride and might
 Awaits the bugle call.

Each knight is in full armour dressed,
 With glittering lance in hand ;
Brightly on breastplate, helm, and crest,
The golden rays of morning rest ;
 And, by ambition fanned,
High beats within each warrior's breast
 The hope of Edith's hand.

Each pawing war-steed shakes his mane,
 Impatient of delay,
And fretted by the curbing rein,
Curvets, and paws the earth again,
 And snorts to join the fray ;
Then, finding all his efforts vain,
 Yields to his rider's sway.

High o'er the lists the royal stand
 Its lofty front uprears :
There sits the monarch of the land,
Bravest of all that martial band,
 Surrounded by his peers ;
And his the warlike mind that planned
 That mustering of spears.

And on that serried mass of mail-clad men
From balcony above
A galaxy of beauty, which no pen
Could draw save that of Love,
Looked down with glance so arch and bright and free
That Love his pen had dropped in ecstasy.

Fairer than all the daughters of the court,
Who all were young and fair,
Like some pale lily freshly culled, and brought
Amidst the roses, and yet losing nought
Of her pure glory there
(Nay, rather there her matchless beauty shone
The lovelier by the sweet comparison),
Sits Editha the fair.

All round her head her wavy golden hair
Clusters, then like some sea
Falls rippling o'er her shoulders, thick and fair,
Until it gains her knee ;
Her eyebrows black as jet : a silken fringe
Of kindred hue shadows each violet eye,
Where burns a light so queenly, pure, and true,
That of that company
Of knights and vassals—all that courtly train—
Not one but would have died to save her pain.

Her face is oval, and her ruby lips
Half-parted—not in scorn—
Like two twin rosebuds which the queen bee sips
Upon some dewy morn,
Reveal, like ocean pearls, her teeth of snow ;
Her nose one straight fine line joined to a forehead low
But wide ; her throat, an ivory column rose below :
The clinging drapery worn

Displays the soft curves of her splendid form—
 Model for Venus ; born to take by storm.
 But, ever and anon, there came and went
 Upon her cheek a hue
 Which rivalled damask, till its power was spent.

Then once again there grew
 A deadly pallor over all her face,
 Her sweet eyes roamed o'er all that peopled space,
 As if in search of one whose knightly place
 Was vacant ; and it threw
 A cruel anguish in those tender orbs,
 A sickening dread, which all things else absorbs.

But hark ! the first of the alarms
 The heralds quickly sound,
 And chargers prance, and knights adjust their arms
 O'er all the tourney ground ;
 And beauties forward lean, and to their charms
 Are added sparkling eye and rosier cheek ;
 But whiter grew one cheek, and her heart's qualms
 No soothing solace found ;
 But pale, betwixt anxiety and dread ;
 She sat like one whose only hope has fled.

Hark ! List again ! The second trumpet sounds
 Its warning clear and shrill ;
 Then rises, 'midst that sheen of spears and shields,
 The Great Knight—victor in a hundred fields,
 And all around with gathering strength there steals
 O'er valley and o'er hill
 The glad shout of a nation, when it feels
 Its monarch worthy of his crown. Then seals
 Each one his lips, while he his wish reveals :
 “ It is my Sovereign Will,

Who proves himself the doughtiest in the land
Hath for reward my daughter Edith's hand ;
Ope ye the lists ! ”

Forth from the crowd rode out a knight
Upon a coal-black steed ;
His armour, bruised in many a fight,
Was of wrought iron, black as night,
And from his helmet, waving bright,
A scarlet plume was freed ;
All else from helm to iron spur
Was black as wing of scavenger.

His sturdy war-steed, stoutly made,
His burden seemed to spurn,
And well his rider's seat displayed
By many a prance and turn ;
And on his ponderous iron shield
(Weapon which he alone could wield)
In tall red letters stood revealed,
That all who saw might learn,
Those flaming letters side by side,
Spell out his haughty motto, “ Pride.”

Then, rising in his stirrups high,
He shakes his quiv'ring lance ;
Harsh rings his hoarse and boastful cry,
And wild his courser's prance :—
‘ My name is Pride. I dare you all,
By this good lance, beneath this castle wall,
Before my king, his peers, and courtiers all,
And yonder maid's sweet glance ;
For never yet in battle, list, or fight,
Have I my equal found in any knight !

The fight was fierce ; the fight was hard and long ;
 But now the fray is o'er ;
And many a warrior, skilled, and brave, and strong,
 Lies on that sanded floor ;
And leaning hard upon his battleaxe
To gain the strength his wounded body lacks,
Stands Pride alone, amidst those bloody tracks
 All dyed with blood and gore.
His boast not vain ; for in that awful fight
Not one was found to prove the better knight.

His armour broke, his helm clove to the eyes,
 The gay plume cut away,
His gallant steed lifeless beside him lies,
 Where many another lay ;
And in those blood-stained lists, 'midst shattered spears
And groans of dying men and women's tears,
His haughty head once more he proudly rears
 The Victor of to-day !
By sheer indomitable will he conquers pain
And mounts another steed to fight again.

The first three knights who fell before his sword—
 The awful blade of Pride—
Greed, Meanness, Avarice, each a mighty lord,
 Now silent side by side.
Honour and Truth, both fighting nobly, fell ;
Passion, a very demon, hot from Hell.
Friendship, a stout old knight, who bore him well
 And clove the helm of Pride ;
Falsehood, a cunning knave, wily, and skilled at feint.
Old Generosity, Young Self-Restraint.

All these he slew, and many minor foes
 Who strove to stem his wrath.
And now his iron gauntlet down he throws,
 But not a knight comes forth :

Then with a mighty shout the people cry,
"There now remains no knight who dares to try
His maiden shield against, in chivalry,
The warrior of the North.

Redeem, O King, thy pledge, and let us see
The victor wed the maid of high degree ! "

Then up the monarch rose, and strove to speak
Amidst that deafening roar,
And pale as death again grew Edith's cheek,
And wilder than before

Her eyes sought vainly in that heaving crowd
For him to whom her secret troth was vowed,
And, seeing nought, her golden head she bowed
To Fate's relentless law ;

When from yon distant hills, and grove of trees,
A silver note comes floating on the breeze.

So loud, so clear, so silvery it broke
Upon the ears of all,
That in the mind of Pride a fear it woke
That perhaps his star might fall ;
Then, bursting thro' the trees at headlong speed,
A warrior mounted on a snow-white steed
Is seen : and Edith's heart is freed

From thoughts which did appal,
And, as the evening sun falls on his golden mail,
No eyes can look thereon and yet not quail.

The lists are reached, he reins his panting steed
Beneath the monarch's stand,
And with a glance which well his cause doth plead,
Surveys the lovely band ;
Then from his courser swiftly doth alight,
And there before her eyes, and in their sight,
Lifting the gauntlet of the man of might,
Restores it to his hand.

LOVE'S CONQUEST.

Then with an oath Pride roars in wrathful need :—
“Bring me fresh armour and another steed.”

Now Pride is mounted, and the trumpets sound ;
 The lances are in rest ;
The stallions gallop forward with a bound ;
 Bent is each knightly crest.
They meet—the shock—the deadlock—and the people's
 shout ;
But neither falls from his high saddle out
Tho' two good lances strew the ground about.
 Can neither prove him best ?
Without there ! Bring fresh lances to each knight
Sound trump again, and onward with the fight.

Again they meet. Again each lance is split,
 Again fresh steel is brought.
What ho ! Fresh topic for the minstrel's wit
 How gallantly they fought !
Once more another lance, once more the shock,
The crash of steel on steel : I see one rock,
Rock in his saddle, and fall headlong down,
 'Tis Pride. His fall is wrought ;
He falls upon the sand—that mighty lord—
Then leaps upon his feet, and draws his sword.

Now, noble minstrel, string thy tuneful lyre
 And sing thy battle lay.
The stranger knight springs off his steed of fire,
 And flings his lance away ;
Then, man to man, they stand upon the sand ;
Never in all the annals of the land
Such fight was fought, and well each strong right hand
 Makes his good broadsword play.
But not a sound is heard save steel on steel .
Or the sharp gasp when back both champions reel.

But quickly they recover, and again
 Fiercer the battle grows,
And blows are showered thick as April rain,
 Yet neither backward goes.
But, see ! Oh, Fate ! Pride one false pass has made
And swift as thought the stranger's glittering blade
Circles around the head defenceless laid
 And batters down his foe's,
Crashes thro' helm and visor to the brain,
And fairly cleaves the head of Pride in twain.

'Tis done. The ruddy life-blood stains the ground,
 And Pride at length is dead.
Then once again the murmur flies around ;
 " Who is this knight ? " they said.
" Who is this stranger clad in golden mail,
Before whose steel our doughtiest champions quail,
Who rides yon Arab with the flowing tail ?
 Let him unbar his head."
But when he heard them, and unbarred his head,
" 'Tis but a boy ! " in wonderment they said.

A boy, but an Apollo of a boy !
 He stood before the King,
His handsome face diffused with love and joy,
 And in his hand a ring ;
His hazel eyes sparkling with keen delight,
His armour bruised and dented in the fight,
He looked the very picture of a knight ;
 He said, " This ring I bring,
Oh, king ! I now make my demand :
Bestow on me thy peerless Edith's hand !

" My name is Love, they call me the Sublime,
 My wings are Mirth and Joy ;
It is my fate all thro' existing time
 Always to be a boy.

'Tis not my maiden field, for I have fought
Since Time, and Earth, and all things first were brought
From Chaos ; and this sword has bought
Full many a victory.

I have a few more fights ; then shall be given to me
All things, and I shall rule eternally."

So, near the lists, where so much blood was shed,
Love and the maid of high degree were wed.

But Love arose from by his loved one's side
And spoke unto the King,
And said, " I have a balm that, whatsoe'er betide,
Will back the life-blood bring."
Then quoth the monarch, eagerly :—
" Restore my fallen knights to me ! "

Then Love stepped down, and with his healing balm
Gently closed up the wounds in Friendship's side ;
Then with his silver trumpet broke the calm,
And Friendship rose from by the corpse of Pride ;

And Generosity and Self-Restraint he cured,
And Truth and Honour who death had endured ;
But Meanness, Falsehood, Passion, Pride, and Greed,
Were left with Avarice, hungry crows to feed,
Till some one, finding all these slaves of sin,
Dug a big hole, and flung such carrion in.

A JINGLE FOR MUSIC.

“ That is best which liest nearest
Shape from that thy work of Art.”

SAID the Master : “ Build the Palace
From the stones which lie around,
From the blocks which are the nearest
Lying strewn upon the ground ;
Time will test which is best—
Blocks which we have never tested
Or the stones which lie around.”

So they worked and built the Palace
From the stones which lay around,
From the blocks which were the nearest
Lying strewn upon the ground ;
'Till the last block was cast
And a stately palace builded
From the stones which lay around.

Let us build a stately nation
From the love that lies around,
From the love, and truth, and honour
Which is nearest to be found !
Till the shout echoes out :
“ Lo ! the strength that made the Nation
Was the Love that girt her round.”

THE RUSSIAN ADVANCE.

THE roll of drums, the bugle peal,
The clink of spurs, and a martial tread,
The prance of steeds, the rumbling wheel
Of cannon. The sheen their bayonets shed
Glittering keen in the morning red ;
While the Russian Eagles float o'erhead.

Lurid the danger signals glow,
And thicker gather the clouds of war,
And rumours which tell of the coming foe—
Ill-omened harbingers—fly before ;
And then with a dim and distant roar,
Which the echoing hills again repeat,
Like the boom of the surf on some rock-bound shore,
The thunder of thousands of marching feet.

Onward they come in the morning gray,
Southwards the tides of their legions roll—
In the gloomiest hour of Britannia's day,
Sullenly South to their Indian goal—
Proudly and loudly their drummers play ;
Proudly and loudly their bugles peal ;
But stern and stubborn to bar the way
Stands a bristling wall of British steel.

TO THE AUTHOR OF "MORNA LEE."

A GREAT thought clothed with living words
That burn upon the heart and brain,
A note struck on Love's strongest chords—
Nor struck in vain.

Not loud, but deep : 'mystic song
Far-echoing thro' the Halls of Thought,
With weird vibrations that belong
To the Unsought.

Trembling upon the verge of things
Seen dimly, or in broken gleams,
Like Unknown Truths whose radiant wings
Brighten our dreams.

A voice which from the air above
Speaks to all hearts ; a fervid breath
Of faith unshaken ; and a love
Stronger than Death.

THE SPIRIT OF NATURE.

O GENIUS of the Universe !
In every soft or freshening breeze
Which stirs the branches of the trees,
I hear the music of thy voice—
The rhythm of a mystic song
Whose cadence haunts the spirit long,
And bids the shades of care disperse,
And makes the restless heart rejoice ;
For, lo ! the presence of a power
Unseen, but felt, hangs o'er the hour ;
Soft as the breeze which evening brings
I hear the rustle of its wings ;
And feel the shadow of its might
Like the calm silence of the night.

O Spirit of the Wilderness,
Solemn and grand and passionless !
Thy voice is in the winds that roam
Without a resting-place or home ;
Thy garb is Nature's loveliness.
In the stern tempest's sullen roar
I hear thy songs of triumph soar ;
In the soft breeze that sinks and dies
The swell of tender harmonies ;
And wild and musical and free
I feel their subtle influence steal
And cast a glamour over me,
Until I cry with fierce appeal :
" Would that my restless heart could be
Light as the breezes, and as free ! "

THE LAND OF SHADOWS.

“ That undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns.”

THERE is a land from whose mysterious shore
No echoes can return to us again ;
No sign, no sound, of gladness or of pain
Tell of the myriads who have gone before.

There is a stream beneath whose turbid wave
Millions have sunk, and millions yet shall sink ;
Dark are the gath'ring shades upon the brink
Unknown the shore its utmost waters lave.

But in the death-like silence of the night,
When the long shadows deepen near and far,
'Tis strange to meditate how frail a bar
Severs the Finite from the Infinite.

Beside the darksome margin of that stream
We, each, shall stand unaided and alone
Upon the trembling verge of things unknown,
Where all the Past shall melt as doth a dream.

A dream ! Why not ? Have we not dreamt before ?
Flashes of recognition glimmer through—
The new dreams are the old, the old the new,
And we, in visions, pass from shore to shore.

Vague influences waken, and a ray
Illumes the hidden chambers of the mind—
Echoes and forms and faces left behind
In some existence that has passed away,

Faint dreams, dim memories of bygone things
Not wholly unfamiliar, for they seem
The reflex of some long-forgotten dream
Whose light and sweetness still around us clings.

Such lights will flash and vanish : as we glance
We scarce can read the truths their beams illumine ;
We are but children groping through the gloom,
And all our knowledge is but ignorance.

But from the Future, from that silent sphere,
That Shadowland no mortal foot shall tread,
Cometh no sign, no whisper, of the dead ;
No sound, no voice, no echo to the ear ;

No answer save the silence. And the veil
Is lifted not, nor shall be, till we stand
Within the confines of that Shadowland
Upon whose verge the stoutest spirits quail.

Oh, well for him who hears with steadfast soul,
When, like the muffled beating of a drum,
The voice of those dark waters whispers "Come,"
Nor fears the brink where the deep shadows roll.

Dogmas and creeds will vanish ; but the Power
Which permeates Nature, whose diviner plan
Is shadowed dimly in the heart of man,
Will still uphold his soul in that stern hour.

That Power whose work is endless—never done—
That breathes in all things in those realms unknown,
Will bind the world's religions in one zone,
And blend the creeds of all men into one.

LOVE.

LOVE knows no law save love alone. It springs
From the eternal majesty of God,
From the infinity of God Himself,
Essence of Life, the Sov'reignty supreme
Which bends our natures to a higher Will ;
And, in the fadeless bowers of Paradise
Where amaranth flowers and thornless roses bloom,
Where angels tread the starry floors of Heaven,
In the celestial harmonies that roll
Vibrating thro' the vast ethereal spheres,
Unfathomable spaces of futurity,
Love's voice goes forth unchallenged, absolute,
Reigning thro' all—for God Himself is Love.
O Power Illimitable ! Power Divine !
That, deathless, burst th' enthralling bonds of Death,
And, rising, soared beyond th' eternal stars,
On thy strong pinions bear our spirits up,
So may we wear thro' all this maze of Life,
Thro' the dark shadows of terrestrial days,
The jewel of imperishable love
That Time and Death and Sorrow cannot dim.

ANIMUS NON MORTALIS EST.

WHERE are they now—the poets of all time,
Who charmed the world with melody and rhyme,
And thoughts sublime and deep ?
Think'st thou they have expired ? No. He who said
Their torch is quenched, and they are cold and dead,
Hath lied—they do but sleep.

And in another purer atmosphere,
Their songs shall peal more sweetly and more clear
Than e'en they did on earth ;
And gath'ring strength from what we cannot see
Shall swell in one great burst of harmony,
With wider nobler girth.

WAR.

IMPERIOUS Goddess ! proud Bellona ! stay,
So I may strive to read thy secret heart ;
Tear from thy cruel face the mask away,
And let men see thee as thou really art.
That lofty air, that brave yet scornful smile,
But hides the pitiless stern features 'neath
The mask by which thou dost men's hearts beguile
To risk their lives to win thy laurel-wreath.
Thy gorgeous pageantry, thy nodding plumes,
The martial music's glorious stirring swell,
Are but the shrouds for twice ten thousand tombs—
For twice ten thousand but Death's solemn knell.
Two hostile hosts ablaze with glittering steel ;
The thunder of artillery ; the shock
Of charging squadrons ; the proud bugle-peal—
Clear, loud, yet silvery, as tho' to mock
Some dying soldier's agonized appeal
To Heaven for mercy ; then the tiny square,
Lost in the dense gray haze of battle-cloud
While charging hordes press round it everywhere,
Still sternly stubborn—but as sternly proud,
Defiant, and immovable—and like the rock
O'er which old Ocean's mountain billows tear,
Break, burst in thunder, yet can not
Move from its native fastnesses one jot.
And men—with quickened senses as they hear
The bugle-call, the clash as steel meets steel,

And see their native banner's crest uprear
High o'er them—then can only feel,
As the battalions of the foe appear
In columned grandeur nearer and more near,
Their pulses throb, and the warm life-blood glow,
And care for nought save victory o'er the foe.
Thus ever, Goddess ! when with naked sword
Thou standest, crying "Glory—onward go !"
Men have been ready to obey thy word,
Nor count the odds, nor heed that blood must flow ;
And so it is, has been, will be, thy plan
So long as earth is earth, and man is man.

That is one side the picture ; but I would—
If so be that I can a landscape draw—
Depict both light and shade, as artist should,
And paint the awful shades of glorious war.
I see the moonlight on the battle-field
When all is silent and the fight is o'er,
And there Death's harvest ; 'tis a mighty yield,
Yet hath he reaped such yields full oft before.
And there they lie—not singly, but in heaps,
In ghastly heaps ; the dying with the dead
All intermingled—while the cold wind sweeps
Across and moans their requiem overhead.
And this is War ! Great, glorious, awful War !—
Whose praises poets still are wont to sing—
With all its pomp, and majesty, and awe !
Yet, to my mind, it seems a gruesome thing
To think that for each wretch maimed, wounded, torn
By shot, and left stark dead upon the plain,
Some loving hearts (tho' far away) must mourn—
Must weep in bitterness—must weep in vain.
"He dies with honour who doth fall in war,"
They say, and count the heroes of the strife.

Can this, the loved one to his home restore,
Or fill his nostrils with the breath of life?
A warrior's grave they deck with laurel leaf,
And honour him whose honour knew no stain,
But to his nearest (in their hopeless grief),
The laurel fades—the cypress will remain.
Imperious Goddess! when it is thy plan
With martial majesty to set the task
For man to battle with his brother man,
Show each thy countenance—without the mask.

TO THE NEW YEAR.

Go forth, O Year, bearing our destinies—
The hopes, joys, sorrows, and the happiness
Which make the sum of our existence here !
The burden of all human life and death
Is on thy shoulders, and from day to day
Will broaden as thy steps draw nearer home.
Lift then thy torch of promise and fair hope
To light the millions on their onward march ;
And, if thy reign be wise, remember this,—
No lesser power than Love can rule a world
Of such complexity of end and aim.

THE SORREL MARE.

I SAW an angler by a stream
Which flowed on gently, rippling by,
And at every sound a watchful gleam
Came and went in his hazel eye ;
And every day for a week or two
In that self-same spot his line he threw.

There is an old manor-house not far away,
With many a quaint old gateway and tower,
And every morn at the break of day,
Ere the sun has risen in all his power,
A gray old groom on a sorrel mare
Comes riding through the gateway there.

In the town hard by, at the " Boar's Head " sign
(A tavern where liquor is cheap and good),
Some Roundhead soldiers over their wine
Are yarning as only old comrades could ;
And at last some one—old Praise-the-Lord Brown—
Begins running his comrades' horses down.

" There is no horse like my stallion gray
From Yorkshire's moors to old London town
For speed and strength, and courage and stay ;
No racer in England can gallop him down !
Ho ! comrades all, in a flagon of ale
Here's health and long life to old Martingale ! "

Then up they stand and their glasses clink ;
" Here's health to old Martingale ! " they say ;
And down goes the liquor without a shrink
As with jovial faces the toast they drink
Of Praise-the-Lord Brown's old stallion gray.
" Ho, fools ! " think I ; " none of you, I swear,
Have seen the stride of that sorrel mare ! "

.

A day or so after, the news flies round—
" The Roundheads have captured Charles the King ! "
The Crop-ears, who've got him safe and sound,
Will past the Manor their prisoner bring.
But still as before (what I'm telling is true)
In that self-same spot that angler threw.

They come ! they come ! those crop-eared curs ;
And he in the middle must be the King ;
I hear horses tramp, and the jingle of spurs,
As 'neath their riders the chargers spring ;
But that angler bold is quite unconcerned,
Nor have I as yet his secret learned.

But see ! They pass quite close to the brook,
And the angler turns to see them go by ;
He makes a swift sign with a meaning look,
And I see the King has caught his eye ;
But of all that crowd none the sign did see
Save I and the King and that angler free.

They pass, and the angler unscrews his rod ;
His fishing is done for a good long while ;
He picks up his basket from off the sod,
And goes away with a curious smile.
But what is that close to the hedge over there ?
Zounds ! It's old Giles on the sorrel mare !

By good St. George ! 'twas a sight to see
When the fisher let go his rod and line
And the mare from old Tom got nearly free,
As she whinnied and pranced and commenced to
whine.

Ah ! well, my bonny, you knew who was there ;
And you've carried that fisher before, I swear !

They talk for a minute—he and old Giles—

While the mare puts her muzzle right into his hand ;

“ Is she fit,” he asks, with one of his smiles,

“ To carry me down to Dover's sands ? ”

“ Fit ? Yes,” says Tom ; “ and further than that,
If she ain't, Sir Fulke, I'll eat my hat.”

One foot's in the stirrup—but “ Hist ! can't ye hear ? ”

And back 'midst the oak trees the cavalier strode.

“ I hear a clatter of hoofs so near,

They must be coming right down the road ;

By our Lady ! a troop !—and Praise-the-Lord Brown !

Zounds ! He's found me out, and will run me down ! ”

Now into the saddle without a word,

And turn her head for Dover's sand ;

And over the fence she flies like a bird,

And down the road comes that crop-eared band ;

But riding first, on his stallion gray,

Old Praise-the-Lord Brown shows his men the way.

“ There he goes ! ” yells Brown : “ the spy ! the spy !

The plagues of Egypt be on his head ;

And fifty pounds of my pay give I

To the man who catches him 'live or dead ! ”

“ Aha ! ” chuckles Giles from behind the hedge,

“ Your turtle's too close to the water's edge ! ”

Then over the hedge with a bound they go ;
The gray horse high o'er the blackthorn sped ;
They are racing now and their hands are low,
But the chase is already two fields ahead.
Quoth Giles to himself, " A brave mount, I declare,
But 'twill take a better to catch the mare ! "

Sir Fulke stands up in his stirrups high,
And glances round and waves his hand ;
He has gained every stride—three fields now lie
'Twixt the sorrel mare and that crop-eared band ;
But leading his comrades by half a field
Steadily onwards the gray horse stealed.

O ! 'tis gallant to ride on a mare like Bess !
Firm turf beneath, and a gaining stride ;
And never she seemed to feel work less
As he patted her neck with honest pride ;
Like clockwork she galloped, like lightning flew
Thro' the lush grass heavy with diamond dew.

But straight ahead looms a bullfinch fence,
Black and gaunt with a stiff oak rail ;
He steadies the mare ; she knows his sense—
She shortens her stride yet does not quail ;
O'er the rasping spires like a dart she sped :
He needs such cattle who rides for his head !

" O my Bessie ! " he cries, exulting now,
As he slackens speed ; he must save her strength :
He wipes the sweat from his wringing brow
And takes up a hole in his stirrup's length ;
Full well he knew had she failed him there
It had been his last ride on his sorrel mare.

But the gray is a gallant horse and true—
Over timber or grass he is hard to beat—
And the rider who steers him is dauntless too,
With an iron nerve and a faultless seat :
Scarce stirred the tips of the bullfinch tall
As he rose like a bird o'er that thorny wall.

Sir Fulke has dallied a little too long
And the stallion behind him can travel and stay ;
But he laughs, for the sorrel is galloping strong,
And he shouts to Brown in his careless way :—
“The mare 'gainst the gray for a flagon of sack,
And my head is the stake if you take me back !”

And now o'er timber, and now o'er grass,
O'er plough, and stubble, and field, and fen,
O'er blackthorn walls like a flash they pass,
Eager horses and reckless men ;
As she tops the ditch by the slope of the hill,
Three fields ahead she is leading still.

With arching neck and a length'ning stride
Splashed and spattered with foam and mire,
She does not flinch where the brook is wide ;
Where the clay is softest she does not tire ;
The heart that ne'er quailed in the martial strife
Will not fail him now when he rides for his life.

The old mill race runs swift and deep,
He can hear the swollen waters roar ;
He can see the current eddy and sweep,
But safety lies on the farther shore :
Bold is the rider and staunch the mare
Who faces the breadth of its waters there.

But Sir Fulke is calm, if the stream is wide ;
His hand is steady, his face is set ;
The heart that danger has proved and tried
In chase and battle is dauntless yet :
He laughs as he thinks of the troopers near,
She is sound as a bell, she can jump like a deer.

From bank to bank thirty feet if an inch !
—The thud of her hoofs is a steadier beat ;—
She pricks her ears, but she does not flinch ;
He settles down with a firmer seat :
A swift rush—a wild bound—she shoots thro' the air
And lands him safe with a foot to spare.

“ Safe ! Safe at last ! Long live King Charles !
I will toast him in Dover ere set of sun ;
Baffled by Bess be all crop-eared carles,
Who follow her heels in a hunting run ;
An old jack-boot and a flagon of ale
Is all I would offer for Martingale.”

“ Not so ! ” quoth old Brown, “ I’ve another Bess here,
We’ll prove which is best, as you’re anxious to try.”
The carbine was true, and the target was near,
And keen down the barrel he laid his eye :
A flash—a report—and an agonized scream—
And the sorrel lay, dying, across the stream.

“ Dying ? Not *dying*, but *dead* ! Bess is gone,
And never again will that gallant heart beat !
Oh, never again on her back to be borne !
Oh, never again her soft whinnies to greet !
Be it rider or horse, be it soul or clay,
No braver spirit has passed away.

"There she lies with her glossy coat muddy and red,
And those rich brown eyes glazed which so brightly
could shine ;
A vile Crop-ear's bullet has shattered her head
Who gave up her young life a forfeit for mine !
Oh, Praise-the-Lord Brown, you've a long score to pay ;
And I'll pay it with interest settling day !"

No need now, ye bullies, for further pursuit :
They forded the stream and arrested their prey.
No answer he gives them ; his strong voice is mute ;
And their summons to rise up he does not obey :
But sits still like one stunned, with her head on his knees,
And the dead sorrel mare is the sole thing he sees.

Then slowly he rises and o'er her does stand,
His handsome face wearing a dull look of pain,
As he stoops o'er her corse, with his knife in his hand,
And severs a lock from her beautiful mane ;
Then they bind him and carry him off to the town,
But he speaks not a word, and looks moodily down.

Sir Fulke was not murdered, nor hanged as a spy ;
Though he stood before Cromwell and spoke for his king ;
But was doomed for long years in a prison to lie,
Till from over the water the glad news took wing ;
And Praise-the-Lord Brown, in a drunken fray,
Was shot through the head on his stallion gray.

To the Second King Charles now the English look ;
To Sir Fulke the manor has been restored ;
His boys now fish in the rippling brook,
Or play at men with their father's sword ;
And oft by old Giles is the story told
Of the sorrel mare Bess and her rider bold.

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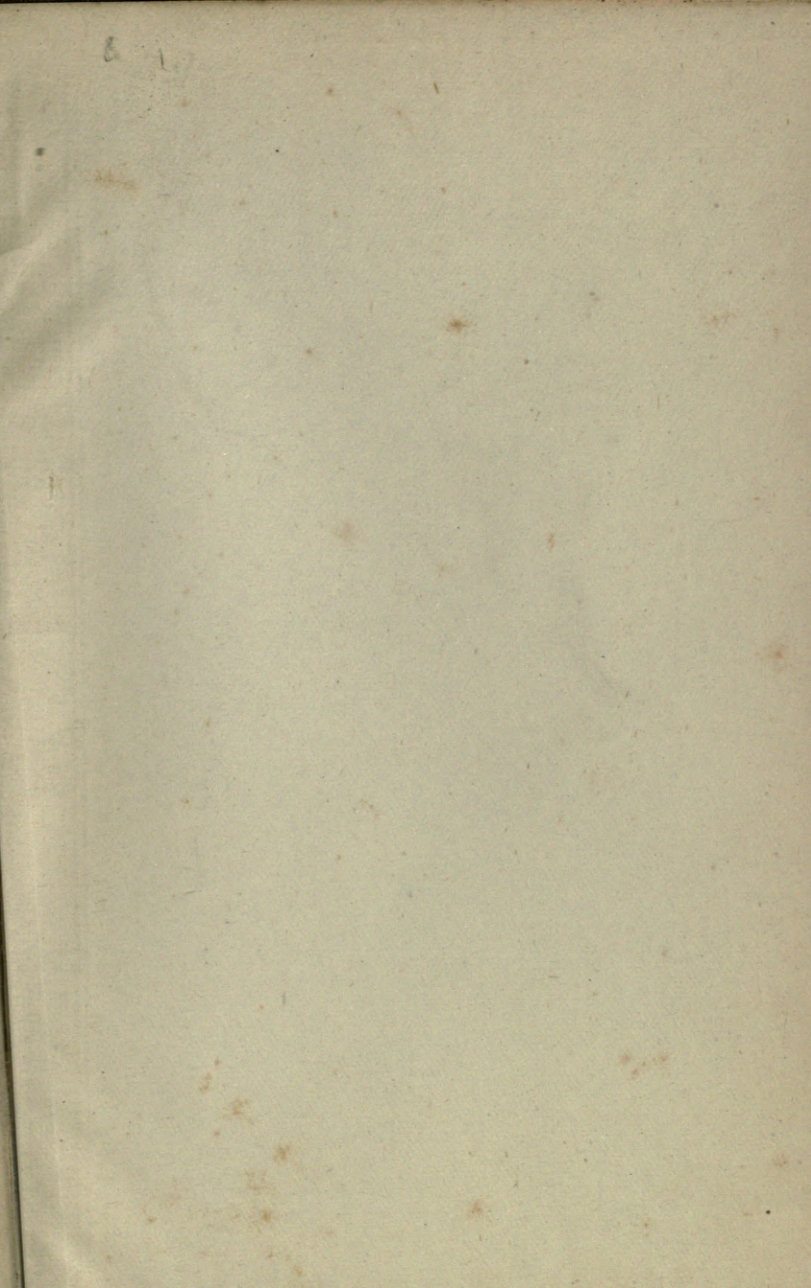
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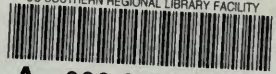
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